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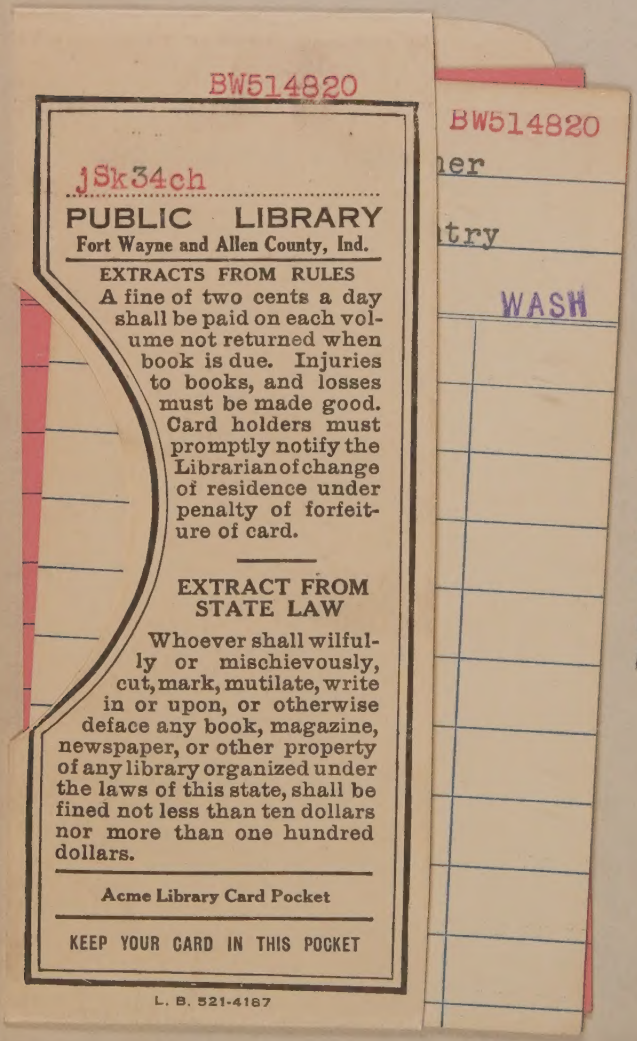
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A CHILD'S BOOK OF COUNTRY STORIES

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A CHILD'S BOOK OF COUNTRY STORIES

WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY

ADA M. SKINNER

AND

ELEANOR L. SKINNER

WITH PICTURES BY

JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH

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INTRODUCTION

To the child who forms the habit of observation the beauty of the world gradually reveals itself. Through companionship with nature, supplemented by the reading of stories which foster an interest in the ever-varying charm of the seasons the young reader enriches his experience by learning to interpret "the open pages of the world about him."

In the "Child's Book of Country Stories" are included nature stories and legends for each season of the year. The beauty and wonder of nature provide excellent themes for tales which quicken the child's interest in the promise of joyous springtime, in the rich pageantry of ripening summer, in the blessings of generous autumn, and in the merry cheer of grim old winter.

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A CHILD'S BOOK OF COUNTRY STORIES

A CHILD'S BOOK OF COUNTRY STORIES

THE SPRING-MAIDEN AND THE FROST GIANTS

In their glittering palace of icebergs the Frost Giants were planning to capture Iduna, the fair Spring-Maiden, and the rare treasure which she guarded. Hoar-Frost, North-Wind, Sleet, Hail, and Blizzard were growing restless, locked in their frozen waste-land of the North. They longed to enter the valley of Spring and bring desolation to the fruitful fields.

"We are helpless unless we seize the Spring-Maiden and take from her the casket of golden apples," said Giant Hoar-Frost. "So long as she guards this life-giving fruit, all nature will rejoice; the birds will sing their foolish jubilees; gay blossoms will flaunt in the meadows; robes of green will bedeck the trees, and the people will enjoy everlasting youth and vigour."

"What you say is true," said Giant North-Wind. "If once I could enter the groves of the Spring-Maiden's valley I'd howl so long and loud that those tiresome birds would stop their endless singing."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Giant Blizzard. "You would need my help, I believe. One of my early morning calls would turn the trembling dew-drops into icicles, and change the smiling faces of the brooks and rills into frozen images!"

"Especially if I went with you," added Giant Sleet, slyly.

"Oh, I should expect to be accompanied by you and your twin brother Hail," nodded Blizzard. "I know how easily you can lock the grass and flowers in a casement of ice which they couldn't break; and Hail has a very clever, quick way of cutting off all the leaves. But the question now is how shall we capture the Spring-Maiden whose apples keep the valley fresh and fair and the people forever young!"

For a few moments the Frost Giants were silent. Many times they had tried to entrap the fair Iduna and her treasure, but they had always failed.

"I have it," said Hoar-Frost. "We must secure the help of Loki, the Prince of Mischief. He lives in Asgard near the Spring-Maiden's groves, and people say he often visits Iduna in order to refresh himself with one of her life-giving apples. Let us capture him first and then compel him to help us. We giants are fast growing old! The magic apples would renew our strength for years to come!"

"Agreed!" said North-Wind, Blizzard, Sleet, and Hail in one voice. "Loki first, and then Iduna!"

After much discussion it was decided that Blizzard should undertake to capture Loki.

THE SPRING-MAIDEN AND THE FROST GIANTS

A short time after the council of the Frost-Giants, Loki, the Prince of Mischief, was amusing himself with a great fire which he had built on one of the hills just beyond the city of Asgard. Several times he stopped and peered into the sky to see what caused the huge shadow which seemed to hover near him. He could see nothing but a gigantic eagle whirling around the summit of the hill. Loki left his fire to gather another bundle of faggots. Suddenly the great bird swooped down very near him. He quickly seized a long stake and struck the intruder across the back. To Loki's amazement one end of the stake stuck fast to the eagle's plumage and the Prince of Mischief could not loosen his hands from the end which he held. The eagle spread its huge dark wings and flew away over rocks and hills far to the North.

"Help! help!" screamed the terrified Loki, but although he struggled with all his might he could not escape from his captor.

When they reached a very lonely spot the eagle alighted on a mountain peak and from the black plumage stepped the Storm Giant, Blizzard, who said:

"Loki, you are in my power and you shall not escape until you promise to help the Frost Giants in a very difficult undertaking!"

"What is that?" gasped the bruised and terrified Loki.

"You must help us to capture Iduna, the Spring-Maiden,

and the treasure which she guards. We cannot enter the valley of Spring until Iduna is made our captive."

"Help you to capture the treasure which gives life and youth to all who partake of it!" said Loki. "Impossible!"

"Then away to the North we will go," declared the Storm Giant, putting on his eagle plumage again.

"Stop! Stop!" cried Loki in terror. "Let me think a moment!"

After a short consideration Loki took an oath that he would betray Iduna and her treasure into the hands of the Frost Giants. Then the Prince of Mischief was freed, and back to the North sped Blizzard.

The next day late in the afternoon, Iduna, robed in a trailing garment of green and crowned with a coronet of blossoms, was walking through one of her loveliest groves. The leaves were dancing to the music of a gentle breeze. A delicious fragrance of hyacinths and roses scented the valley. She sat down near a cool fountain and placed her treasure-casket of apples on the marble basin.

Presently a long shadow darkened the path near her, and looking up quickly the Spring-Maiden saw Loki standing near.

"I have come for the refreshing gift of one of your apples, Iduna," said he. "A long journey has wearied my limbs and broken my spirit."

"You are very welcome to one of them," said Iduna, open-

ing her box. "It has been some time since you tasted a golden apple."

Loki began to eat the precious gift, and Iduna watched him closely. She was very proud of her refreshing fruit.

In a little while he put the half-eaten apple on the basin of the fountain and said, "I am going to tell you a secret, Iduna. Not far away from here I discovered a grove where a marvellous tree grows. It bears fruit shaped like yours but larger and of a deep golden colour."

"Oh!" laughed the Spring-Maiden, "the fruit may be larger and more beautiful than mine, but I'm sure it has not the power to put youth and life into those who partake of it."

"I am afraid you are mistaken," said the wily Loki. "People who have eaten the fruit of this tree say that its refreshing power is wonderful. If you wish, I will gladly guide you to the grove—it is not far away—and then you can compare this fruit, which is attracting much attention, with yours. Will you go?"

"Yes, I will indeed," said Iduna, who could not believe that any other apples were comparable with hers.

Loki led the way and Iduna, carrying her treasure, followed him eagerly. She was a little surprised to find the grove Loki described so far away from Asgard, but her desire to find fruit more wonderful than the magic apples urged

her on. Finally they reached a meadow bordered by a dense forest.

"Look," said Loki, pointing forward, "we shall soon reach the place."

Suddenly a dark shadow fell across Iduna's path. The Storm Giant, disguised in eagle's plumage, swooped down, caught the Spring-Maiden and her golden apples in his talons, and sped away to the frozen North. There the Frost Giants imprisoned the captive in one of their ice-palaces.

It was not long before the joyous valley of Spring felt the absence of Iduna. The flowers drooped and faded; the grass became parched and brown, and the tender green foliage turned to burnt orange, crimson, and russet.

"What has become of Iduna?" cried the people. "See how the valley is changing!"

Slowly but surely the Frost Giants were working their way toward the valley of Spring. One night Hoar-Frost stalked along the outskirts of the groves and withered the leaves and flowers with his icy breath. The next morning the people heard the dismal howl of North Wind. "We must find the Spring-Maiden or we shall die," they cried in alarm.

In their distress they begged Odin, the wise hero who governed Asgard, to call a special council in order to determine how the secret of Iduna's disappearance could be discovered.

Odin called together his hero council and after earnest

thought they decided to question Loki, the Prince of Mischief. He had seldom been seen in Asgard since the Spring-Maiden had left the valley. One of the heroes declared that the last time he saw Iduna, she was walking with Loki.

The Prince of Mischief was accordingly summoned to appear in the council of heroes. His answers to the questions they asked him aroused suspicion.

"Tell us the truth about this matter," said the hero Thor, in a voice which shook like the roar of distant thunder.

Then the cowardly Loki confessed the plot which robbed the valley of the Spring-Maiden and her magic apples.

"Loki," said Odin sternly, "I command you to bring back Iduna. Let there be no delay, for even the heroes of Asgard are suffering in her absence!"

Loki knew he dared not disobey this final command. He disguised himself in falcon's plumage and sped away to the desolate North where a dull leaden sky overhung all the land. In circling about the icebergs, he spied the Storm-Giant, fishing from the top of a large rock. Loki descended quickly, flew into one of the openings of the Giant's ice-palace, and made his way to the place where Iduna lay sleeping on a rough couch. The Prince of Mischief stepped out of his disguise and awakened the Spring-Maiden.

"False Loki," she cried. "Have you come to do more mischief?"

"I have been sent by Odin to rescue you," said he. "You can escape only by the help of my magic."

Then he transformed Iduna and the precious casket of apples, placed them in a magic nutshell, put on his falcon plumage, and flew away toward Asgard.

As he sped across the dull sky, the Storm-Giant looked up and saw him.

"It is Loki disguised as a falcon," he said. "He is taking the Spring-Maiden back to Asgard. But he shall not escape me!" Instantly the Storm-Giant put on his eagle plumage and flew after Loki.

How anxiously the people of Asgard watched for the return of Loki with Iduna. They heaped great piles of chips around the walls of Asgard and held torches ready to light the fires in case the Frost Giants came near.

On the third day after Loki's departure from Asgard, the people saw two great birds flying with lightning speed toward the city.

"It is the Storm-Giant following Loki," they cried. "What a furious pursuit! See! See! The eagle is gaining on the falcon! Light the fires as soon as Loki passes over! Ready! The fires." Another moment of breathless suspense! The falcon swept over the walls of Asgard. Instantly a blaze burst forth all around the city. The falcon had won the mighty race. The eagle whirled far above the flames and

looked down into the city. He dared not descend. With a cry of despair he sped back to the ice-bound Northland.

"The joyous Spring-Maiden is ours again," cried the happy people as they gathered around Iduna. "Her presence fills us with life and hope. See, the casket of golden apples is safe in her hands! Soon all nature will be fair and beautiful. The Spring-Maiden is our joy."

HOW THE BLUEBIRD WAS CHOSEN HERALD *

QUERY QUEER was the boy who loved the woods and asked so many questions. The Wise-and-Wonder-Man was the spirit of the woods whom Query met one day and who answered Query's questions. Of course, as Query often went to the woods it was quite certain that he should sometime meet the spirit again. And so he did. It happened one day just as the snow was disappearing and the sun was growing warm. Query had been taking his first spring walk, and, as he was a bit tired, he sat down on the sunny slope of a knoll. He was scarcely seated when down out of the green boughs of a hemlock tree in front of him slid the Wise-and-Wonder-Man, dressed in his light blue suit with every button a silver bell, and his pointed cap to match, with its fringe of silver-bells. At every move he made, the bells went *tinkle-tankle, tinkle-tankle.* Query was so surprised that he almost forgot to breathe.

"Good morning, Query," said the Wise-and-Wonder-Man, "what are you wondering about now?"

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"I was just wondering," said Query, nodding his head toward a bluebird near by, "why the bluebird is the first bird of spring."

"Why, he is the herald, you know."

"But how did he come to be the herald? Do you know?"

"I have heard," said the Wise-and-Wonder-Man.

"Who told you?"

"My grandmother. She said her grandmother's grandmother's grandmother told the story; and what her grandmother's grandmother's grandmother said, my grandmother says is so."

"Of course," said Query. "Would you tell me the story?"

"Certainly; make yourself comfortable."

Query lay down on one elbow and the Wise-and-Wonder-Man sat on a fresh, clean chip, that the choppers had made, and talked.

"You know there are four spirits of the year, Springtime, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. Some folks call them seasons, but they are *really* spirits. Of all four spirits, Springtime is the favourite. He had been coming to the earth every year for a great many years, year after year, when he got it into his head that it would be a fine thing and quite becoming to his dignity to have a herald,—some one to carry his colours and play the fife. At first he thought of the fragrant flowers; they could bear his colours. But he reflected that they could not play the fife. Then he thought of the buzzing bee; he might be

taught to play the fife. But he remembered that he would not do, because he could not carry the colours. So he decided that he must have a bird.

"Springtime, being a very lively and practical spirit, called the birds together that very morning. He asked them all to meet him by the Great Rock under the Great Tree by the Great Bend of the Big River. They all came—birds of every size and colour and description. He sat on the Great Rock while the birds sat on the grass and listened with wide, round, blinking eyes and with heads cocked to one side.

"He made a speech to them of some length. He told them that he desired a herald to carry his colours and to play the fife. Of course, the bird to be chosen should be handsome and musical. But he must be more than all that. He wanted a bird of exceptionally good character, in fact, the very best bird that could be found. He did not expect to find a perfect bird, he said, but he desired a bird as nearly perfect as he could obtain. He concluded his speech by saying that his herald should be:

> " 'Both handsome and happy, gifted and good,
> And as modest as modest can be,
> The very best bird that flies in the wood,
> I would that my herald be he.'

The choice, he said, he would leave to the birds as they knew each other thoroughly.

"The birds put their heads together and talked in at least

forty different languages. Finally, their spokesman told Springtime that they were content to leave the selection to a committee of six whom he might name. As Springtime wanted to be on good terms with all the birds, he thought it not best that he should appoint the committee. He pulled a handful of grass and held it tightly between his hands just so that the ends would stick out, and then he asked the birds to come up, one by one, and pull out a blade. The six who should draw out of the shortest blades of grass were to be the committee.

"They walked up, one by one, and drew. Mr. Crow drew the shortest blade and so was the chairman. Mr. Parrot came next, then Mr. Blue Jay, Mr. Robin, Mr. English Sparrow, and Mr. Bluebird. It was a strange committee, to be sure, of all sizes and kinds of birds.

"That very evening the six birds met in a corner of Mr. Farmer's orchard upon a dead branch of an old apple tree. They talked and talked and talked. They discussed all the birds that they knew, spoke of their good qualities and their bad ones.

"At last, as it grew late, very late, almost eight o'clock, and they had come to no conclusion, Mr. Bluebird proposed that they should vote, and all agreed. But how should they vote? That was the next question. Mr. Bluebird suggested that each one, as his name was called, should stand up and say which bird he thought was best fitted to be the herald. Mr. Crow cleared his throat and said that he did not think this

was the wisest way. He thought it better, he continued, that each one should write the name of his choice on the under side of a leaf. The other members of the committee agreed with Mr. Crow. Each bird, therefore, took a leaf, and wrote a name upon it, and Mr. Bluebird counted the votes. There was one vote for Mr. Crow, one vote for Mr. Parrot, one for Mr. Blue Jay, one for Mr. Robin, one for Mr. English Sparrow, and one for—I don't remember whether it was for Mr. Song Sparrow or Mr. Bobolink. Would you believe it?—every bird except the bluebird had voted for himself. The bluebird knew, because he knew the foot-writing of all the birds. He had seen it in the soft sand by the water.

"It was certain that they were not going to be able to decide among themselves who should be chosen, so Mr. Bluebird made another suggestion.

" 'I recommend,' he said, 'that we go and consult the old Wizard, Mr. Owl, who holds court every night by the light of the moon in the hollow of a great grey tree over the ridge. He is the wisest of birds and knows everything. I have heard, too, that whenever there is a star with a tail in the sky he can read your fortunes and your character. Now it so happens that at this very time there is in the sky a star with a tail, for I saw it this morning. Little Bluey, my eldest child, woke up very early and I had to fly out to get him a worm to keep him quiet. Just as I was starting, long before sunrise, I saw the comet. I propose that we go at once and consult

the Wizard and let him decide for us who should be the herald.'

"'It seems to me,' said the crow, 'that this is a most excellent suggestion. The Wizard is certainly a very wise bird. I have heard of him and doubtless he has heard of me. By all means, let us go.'

"It was decided then and there that they should go that very night, just as soon as the comet rose. Mr. Bluebird was to give the signal because he knew where to look for the comet.

"At the proper moment Mr. Bluebird shook them all by the wing and woke them up, and they started, Mr. Crow going first, then Mr. Parrot, Mr. Blue Jay, Mr. Robin, Mr. English Sparrow, and Mr. Bluebird.

"They flew and they flew and they flew, for it was a long way and a hard way to find, and not one of the six had ever been out so late in his life. When they reached the wood they were obliged to fly very carefully, so that they should not bump their heads against the trees, and so that they might be able to read the signs along the way. At length they spied a great grey tree, with a dimly lighted window in it, far up the trunk. Mr. Crow read the name on the door-plate and announced that they had reached the right house. There was no door-bell so Mr. Crow scratched three times,—scratch, scratch, scratch.

"'Who-who?' came from within.

"'Friends,' said the crow, 'six friends come to consult the Wizard.'

"The latch was promptly lifted and the six birds walked solemnly in and up the stairs.

"They found themselves in a little dark round room with seats against the sides. Mr. Owl sat over on one side, his great fluffy coat turned up at the neck and his fluffy hood pulled down to meet it. He had his spectacles on and was reading by the light of his lamp,—that is, it looked like a lamp, but Mr. Owl explained later that it was not a lamp but the comet's light which he caught through a knot-hole.

"The Wizard received them pleasantly and motioned to them to be seated. Mr. Crow sat down in front of the Wizard at his right, then the others in order, Mr. Bluebird sitting at the left.

"'It is very late,' observed the owl. 'It must be most important business that brings you to me at this hour of the night.'

"'It is,' replied the crow, 'exceedingly important business, indeed.'

"Then in plain and emphatic words he told the Wizard what their errand was. He repeated as nearly as he could the speech of Springtime, especially the last words:

"'Both handsome and happy, gifted and good,
And as modest as modest can be,
The very best bird that flies in the wood,
I would that my herald be he.'

"He told the Wizard of their inability to decide who should be chosen and of their conclusion to leave the choice to him. This was the reason of their visit.

"Then the owl looked grave as a judge and remarked, 'It seems to me in this situation that the first thing to be done is to secure the opinion of each of you as to who is the fittest bird to be chosen. Mr. Crow, will you be so good as to give us your opinion?'

"Mr. Crow stood up, cleared his throat, and said, 'To speak quite frankly, it seems to me that I, myself, should be chosen. It is scarcely possible to find a better bird.'

" 'What makes you think so?' asked the owl dryly.

" 'My wife,' said the crow. 'Only to-day Mrs. Crow said to me, "Mr. Crow, my dear husband, you are a perfect man, unless—"'

" 'Unless what?' inquired the Wizard, raising his eyebrows.

" 'I don't recollect,' replied the crow, 'in fact, I didn't hear distinctly, but I am sure it was something unimportant,' and he sat down.

" 'Mr. Parrot,' said the Wizard, 'your opinion, if you please.'

" 'It is my opinion,' said Mr. Parrot, 'that I am the bird who should be chosen. I have heard myself talk on many an occasion, and I am sure that I speak both wisdom and wit. In modesty, I forbear to say more.'

"'Mr. Blue Jay!' called the Wizard.

"'Since you ask me, Mr. Wizard, for my honest opinion I am bound to say that I feel that I am the only bird for this position. I have been looking in the glass to-day; in fact, I see myself in the glass very often, and I have never yet observed a single fault in myself. There is no bird who can say more.'

"'Mr. Robin, if you please.'

"Mr. Robin arose with his fingers in his armholes: 'I am quite convinced, Mr. Wizard, from much observation, that I should be made the herald. I am handsome and gifted, if I do say it myself. Besides, I live in the best of society; I dwell in the Bishop's orchard. This very day I heard the Bishop say, "That robin is a fine, handsome bird,—as fine and handsome as a Bishop." I am sure that recommendation is enough.'

"'Mr. English Sparrow.'

"'I am sure, Mr. Wizard,' said the sparrow, speaking very rapidly and excitedly, 'that while I am not so big as some of these who have spoken, I have a better claim than any of them to this high office. For I have long made it a practice to study carefully the faults and weaknesses of all the other birds, and I know that I have none of these failings.'

"'Mr. Bluebird,' said the Wizard, 'what have you to say?'

"'Nothing, Mr. Wizard. I have not made up my mind.

I leave the matter entirely to your eminent wisdom and judgment.' And he sat down.

"'Well,' said the owl, after a moment's deliberation, 'the next thing to do under these circumstances seems to be to read your fortunes, that is, your characters, in the light of the comet. I shall ask you, one by one, to step up on this judgment-seat at my left, where the light of the comet can fall on you and where I can see you plainly. Mr. Crow, will you be the first?'

"Mr. Crow stepped up to the judgment-seat very confidently, while the Wizard put on his spectacles and turned the lamp so that the light fell full upon the glossy feathers of the large black bird. It was a revolving seat, which the Wizard turned round and round slowly so that he could see all sides of the bird. 'A fine bird,' he said, very deliberately, as if thinking aloud, 'a perfect bird, unless—unless what?—let me see—ah, a slant in the left eye—in *both* eyes—a *very decided* slant—very sly—very cunning—inclined to steal—very *much* inclined to steal—a thief, in fact; steals Mr. Farmer's corn and peas—especially in the early morning when nobody is around—a *very bad* fault—one of the worst. I am quite sure, Mr. Crow, that Springtime would not choose you for his herald—he could not trust you. That will do. Mr. Parrot!'

"Mr. Parrot walked up very sedately and took his place on the judgment-seat. The Wizard gazed at him gravely and stroked his back. 'Fine feathers—green, red—yellow—fine

feathers—rather small head—large tongue—large tongue, small head—talks more than he thinks—talks *very much* more than he thinks—talks often *without* thinking—says what he hears others say. Tongue rather harsh, too—and blisters at the end—bad words! bad words! I am sorry to say, Mr. Parrot, that I cannot recommend you as herald. People would not be glad to see you year after year. That will do. Mr. Blue Jay!'

"The blue jay stepped up very jauntily and took the seat.

"The Wizard looked at him admiringly, for he was clad in a beautiful tailor-made suit that fitted him to perfection. 'A handsome bird,' he said, 'a handsome bird,—that is, handsome clothes. Eye very good, too—a little slant, a little slant —but on the whole a good eye. Let me see, what is this on the back of the head? these long feathers?—oh, a crest! I see. Just for decoration. A vain bird, vain as a peacock—and like all vain people, hard to get along with—and very unfriendly—likes to flock alone—other folks not quite good enough. I regret to inform you, Mr. Blue Jay, that Springtime would not desire you as his herald. That will do. Mr. Robin!'

"The robin hopped up on the seat in his fine dress suit and red shirt-front, his chest inflated and his eyes shining. The Wizard looked at him intently for some time, then he began, 'You are the Bishop's friend, you say. Let me see—a bright red spot on your bill—the Bishop's cherries, I should

say—but we'll let that pass. Eye very suspicious—*very* suspicious—always looking even among your best friends, to see if somebody isn't going to harm you—cannot pull a worm out of the Bishop's garden without looking around suspiciously all the time. A very unhappy frame of mind to be in—unhappy for you—unhappy for others. You would hardly do for the herald. That will do. Mr. English Sparrow!'

"The English sparrow fluttered up noisily and took his place. 'You say,' began the Wizard, 'that you have not the faults of the other birds.'

" 'Yes,' said the sparrow, talking very fast, 'I am not as mean as the crow, and I don't talk such nonsense as old Polly, and I'm not so stuck up as the jay, and I am not suspicious as the Bishop's friend is. I haven't any of the faults of the other birds.'

"The Wizard pushed his spectacles up on his brow, turned the light away, and looked at him, 'I see,' he said, 'I do not need the comet light at all. I could see you in the dark. Sharp bill—sharp tongue—sharp claws, in a continual state of bad temper—very quarrelsome—very unpleasant neighbour; in fact, a common nuisance. That will do. Mr. Bluebird!'

" 'I am sure, Mr. Owl,' said the bluebird, rising, 'that I need not take your time. I am not the bird to be chosen, for I know that I am far from being a perfect bird. I have many faults. There are many nobler birds than I from whom Springtime may choose his herald.'

"But the Wizard was quite insistent that the bluebird should come forward where he could read his fortune.

" 'You say that you have many faults,' remarked the Owl. 'That may be, but I see by the light of the comet that they are small, very faint indeed. Besides, the ability to see one's faults and the desire to correct them is the greatest of virtues. There may be better birds, but I am frank to say that I am not acquainted with them. I have no hesitation, Mr. Bluebird, in saying that it is my judgment that you should be the herald of the Spring, for, if you will permit me to say it, it seems that you are

" 'Both handsome and happy, gifted and good,
And as modest as modest can be,'

whereat Mr. Bluebird blushed painfully, while in his heart he was very happy.

"Springtime agreed with Mr. Owl, and posted notices on every tree by the water's edge that Mr. Bluebird should henceforth be his herald, the first bird of the spring.

"There is one now on the branch of that old tree," said the Wise-and-Wonder-Man. "He is carrying the colours and playing the fife."

"What is he saying?" asked Query.

"Well," said the Wise-and-Wonder-Man, "it always sounds to me as if he were saying, 'Pur-i-ty, pur-i-ty,' but I asked him one day and he said it was only, 'Spring-is-here, spring-is-here.' "

GENERAL JIM *

JIM cracked his shell in a nest up in the tip of an old pine tree in the big swamp, and his first glimpse of the world was a vision of tree tops and blue sky. Jim, and his brother Jim and his sister Jim (why are crows always named Jim?) did not enjoy their Peter Pan-nish house very long. The reason was that young Tom Harris knew a man who said he'd like a pet crow, and Tom assumed that, of course, he'd like three pet crows three times as much; so, when Tom saw the nest in the swamp and heard the three babies crying for their dinner, as only baby crows can cry, he scurried home for a bag and a long string, returned clad in overalls and climbed the tree. This was a matter of no small labor, and after he had secured the three baby birds it was no less a job to lower the bag without injury, through the branches to the ground. He got them safely down, however, and carried them in triumph to the man who, in a careless moment, had expressed a desire for a pet crow.

He was a big man, with a big laugh, a big garden, a big dog, a big small son, and a big heart. The only thing little

*_General Jim_ first appeared in _On the Edge of the Wilderness_, and is reprinted here by permission of the author and the publisher, W. A. Wilde Company.

about him was his house, and that was a delightful old farmhouse between country road and garden, with the woods beyond. He had quite forgotten that he wanted a crow, but when he saw the contents of Tom's bag, he remembered that he wanted three. So that was how Jim and Jim and Jim found themselves, after their distressing adventure, in a new home at the bottom of a barrel, with a netting over the top, so neither cat nor dog could molest them. Tom and the big man's big small son were out in the garden digging up worms and grubs to stop the clamor of the young birds.

Nothing, however, can stop the clamor of a hungry little crow. You dangle a nice fat grub in front of him, and he opens a yawning cavity of mouth and says, in a raucous, strident, impatient tone, "Caw!" Then you drop the grub in his mouth, and he keeps right on cawing, but swallowing at the same time, so that it sounds something like this—"Caw-wobble, obble, obble." As soon as the grub is down, his mouth opens again and he crossly insists on more.

But the big man was wise. He knew that if you give a baby crow all it wants to eat, it will gorge itself into an untimely grave. So Jim and Jim and Jim were taught to leave the table hungry, as it were, and they throve on this self-denial. Soon a perch had to be put in half-way up the barrel, and before very long they were all three up on the rim, and then down on the ground, and the big man's son expected to see them fly away.

But they didn't fly away, not even after they had taught themselves to take the air. The big man's wife sometimes wished, perhaps, that they would, but they didn't. Sometimes they sailed out over the fields and woods, but they always came back, especially when wild crows, drew near them. Instead of going to their kind, they seemed to be in fear of them. But on the place they were in no fear of anything, least of all of Don, the big collie dog. Jim, our hero, was Don's chief tormentor. His favorite sport was to wait until Don was fast asleep, and then he would pick up a shining, smooth pebble (it wasn't always smooth, either!) in his beak, walk carefully up to the dog's head, lift the flap of his ear, and drop the pebble inside. Don would at once wake up with an impatient grunt, shake the pebble out, and go to lie down somewhere else. As soon as he was asleep again, Jim would repeat the operation, until finally the poor dog would be driven to take refuge in the house.

Jim had other forms of sport, however. He discovered, for instance, that by flying down suddenly, with loud caws, upon the back of one of the sheep in the pasture, and fixing his claws in the sheep's wool, he could send the startled animal cavorting over the landscape. In this way Jim enjoyed many a free ride, and appeared to take much the same pleasure in it that a cowboy takes in riding a bucking broncho. Still another trick was to wake up the family at five a. m. This he did by flying to the big man's chamber window ledge (the

window was always open) and cawing at the top of his lungs, till somebody tossed him out a scrap of food. It wasn't exactly a pleasant trick, and Jim never knew how close he came sometimes to having his neck wrung!

In the matter of food, he and his brother and sister were peculiarly fortunate. Not only did they get table scraps, bits of meat (which they dearly loved), and all the crumbs from Don's dish, but the big man had a garden in which he hoed; and when they saw him enter this garden, they flew with joyful noise, if not with song, after him, and followed his hoe or cultivator up the rows, pouncing greedily on every white grub his implement turned up. He used to call them his best helpers, at such times, as indeed they were. They certainly ought to have become fat and healthy crows. Nevertheless, it is to be feared that they were somewhat afflicted with what the soldiers so call cooties. One day the big man saw Jim, and later Jim and Jim also, squatting contentedly down in a big ant hill, not taking a dust bath, like a hen, but just squatting. He couldn't conceive why they should choose such a place to squat in, until he chanced to read that the poilus in France spread their shirts on ant hills when no decootieizing machine was handy. That raised his already high estimate of Jim's intelligence.

But whether from parasites or some deeper cause, Jim's brother and sister never could seem to retain their flight

feathers, and while they could skim about a few feet above the ground, only Jim became and remained a full fledged aeronaut. But it did not appear greatly to interfere with their happiness, and every night they hopped up the rungs of a ladder which ended under the overhang of the house eaves, and took their places to roost beside Jim, who flew there. This practice continued for some time. One day, however, as the two crippled birds were half hopping, half skimming, around the yard, Jim, from a tree near by, emitted a loud, startling caw. As if they understood him perfectly (as they doubtlessly did), Jim and Jim scurried for cover under the grapevines. At the same instant, out of the shadow of the woods swept a marsh hawk, hovered a second, and dived for the hurrying pair.

But he didn't get to them. Quick as he, Jim dived too. He dived straight at the hawk, from above, and landed a vicious peck on his head. The hawk balked quickly, and swung around and up to meet his attacker, but Jim kept above him, and landed another jab. The hawk saw that his prey were under cover now, and lost. Pretending, with much dignity, to ignore Jim's existence, he flew rapidly away, the smaller bird, with loud caws, following him for three hundred yards or more. Then Jim resumed his vigil in the tree top. It was some hours later that he cawed again, and once more the shadow swooped, and once more Jim dived to the rescue.

That night, for the first time, Jim did not sleep on the

top rung of the ladder, under the eaves, with his brother and sister. He perched on the ridgepole of the house, where he could command the whole horizon!

The big man pointed this out to his son.

"If every man," he said, "were as brave and watchful to defend his weaker brothers, this would be a better world."

"Jim's a good old scout," said the big man's son.

Now you can call Jim's action instinct, or what you like. All I know is that Jim never roosted again on the ladder, but always on the ridgepole. It looks to me like a remarkably quick learning of a lesson, coupled with a natural disposition to protect his kind. I should say it showed Jim to be both intelligent and social.

When autumn came, and Jim was a fine, strong bird, with glossy black feathers that reflected the sun when he banked for a turn, the big man and his family decided to close the little farmhouse and go to the far-away city for the winter. They couldn't take Jim with them, nor his poor brother and sister, either.

"It will be all right to leave Jim," the big man said. "He can look after himself. But Jim and Jim can't. It would be cruel to abandon them."

So he caught the two crows with the imperfect flight feathers, and Jim never saw them again. He flew around the garden cawing for them, but they did not appear. The next day, when he woke up and flew to the bedroom window, he

found the window closed. He pecked at the glass, and made a loud noise, but nothing happened. Don was gone, too. No scraps were put out for him at breakfast time. Wondering and disconsolate, he flew around the deserted garden, and fed himself that day by watching the corn shocks standing in the field, and pouncing on the mice which ran in and out under them. That night he was bitterly cold upon the ridgepole, and without Jim and Jim to protect he saw no reason why he should remain on it. So he sought the ladder under the eaves —but that was gone! He flew over to a pine tree, and got in among the branches. There was no wind there, nor could any hawk see him from above while he slept. Toward morning he heard a noise overhead, a noise of many wings in steady beat, and now and then a caw. A great flock of crows were going south. Something stirred in him, some instinct to rise high into the air and join them. But he did not go. This was home to him here, and, besides, he did not know what would happen to him among all these strangers. So he remained in his pine tree, while the flock streamed south.

Jim waited and waited about the deserted house, but still there was no scrap of breakfast by the door, no sign of the people and the dog he knew, no brother and sister for company. At last a snow came, and he was positively hungry. The mice burrowed under the snow, and it was hard to detect them. The stray kernels of corn around the fields and the barn were all covered. So were the oats. Jim made a higher

flight than was his wont, and gazed over the surrounding country for signs of help. Far off, over a snowy meadow, he saw the black forms of three crows, and forgetting his fear in his hunger, he flew directly toward them.

They were circling and settling over the snowy fields when he drew near, and all three began to caw when they saw Jim coming. Their voices did not seem unfriendly. Jim recognized one of them as a crow which had lived that summer close to his yard. In fact, they seemed to be trying to tell him of food in the field. He came closer, with increased confidence, till he could see that they were getting food from the black, exposed earth on the sides of a swift brook which cut through the grass, a dark, winding thread on the snow-white sheet of the meadow. Jim circled close now, three or four times, cawing a tentative answer to the greetings of the three strangers. Then he flew into a tree and watched the proceedings a few moments more, before actually venturing to join the tiny flock. At last he made up his mind, swung out on the air with a loud caw, and dropped to the side of the brook, extracting a mussel from the ooze, for that was what the others were doing.

After he had only partially satisfied his hunger, the other three crows flew away, flinging back a half invitation to join them as they went. Jim was tempted, but he couldn't quite make up his mind to go. Instead, he fished some more and then he went back to his familiar pine tree for the night. For several days thereafter Jim joined these three crows every

day, traveling with them about the country looking for food, and learning from them many ways of getting it. They taught him of course, for instance, to fly over a field where the snow was light, looking for signs of oat stalks, and when they were seen, to scratch close to them for dropped grain. They taught him the food value of many seeds, and how to peck around the cracks and bark scales of old trees (especially apple trees) and rotten stumps for grubs and larvae. Jim, whose food had always come easy, was green at first, but he was a ready pupil, and could soon shift with the best, and seldom went hungry.

At last, however, there came a great storm, with a terrible wind and bitter cold. Poor Jim almost froze to death, huddled in the deepest, most protected part of his pine, because he could not venture out for food in such a blizzard, nor find any if he did venture out, and without a lot of food a bird, which is an intensly hot-blooded creature, soon perishes. His little engine has to be stoked regularly and energetically to keep up steam. It was not till late the following day that Jim could get out any distance in his search, and by then his vitality was so low that he could just make headway against the wind. He rose high, and looked about, over a world in which half the landmarks were wiped out. Some way off, between the almost buried lines of stone walls which bounded the road, he saw a wood sled jogging along, falling into a walk now and then as the horses tugged it over a packed drift. On

this sled were a man and several bags. Jim almost blew down toward it, but like a bit of black paper on the gale, and his keen eyes now detected something dropping behind. Down lower he dropped, and with a caw of joy fell upon the grains of "mixed feed" which were oozing out from a bag on the back of the sledge, unknown to the driver. Every time the sledge had tipped backward as the horses pulled it up on to a packed drift, a little stream of cracked corn and other delicacies had poured out and still lay on the hard snow. Jim fell upon the first he spotted, and ate ravenously.

He began to warm up. His blood flowed again. His wings felt stronger. As soon as his hunger was satisfied, he rose into the air, and began to circle, cawing loudly again the chill, lemon-gold sunset. He was calling to his three friends. He knew they must be hungry, too. Here was food enough for a hundred crows. He must find them, and let them know! At last he was rewarded by an answering caw, and one of the three appeared above the pines on the slope of the mountain. Jim sung rapidly toward him, down wind, and soon he was leading all three toward the precious trail of grain on the road. While the three ate, Jim, too, consumed a little more, walking back along the trail of feed, which evidently extended clear to the village.

But his work was not yet done. Flying to a roadside tree, the oldest crow loudly called the rest. This storm had created a dangerous crisis for all the crows who had elected to winter

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in those parts, instead of going south. Tribal safety demanded that as many as possible be notified of the salvation offered by the grain. Jim was to go north, he himself would go south, another east, another west. Each was to bring back all the crows he could muster as soon as it was daylight. So Jim's social consciousness was thus enlarged from the neighborhood to the tribe. No sleep in his warm tree for him that night! He flew by the stars, over strange fields, cawing his tidings as he went, and making long detours to each side to cover all the area possible, and when the east reddened, he headed back, again swinging to left and right, cawing loudly, till he had gathered in more than a hundred and fifty crows behind him, coming by ones and twos and threes from many places. They reached the snowy road where the grain lay, and found other crows there by the scores, then by the hundred, till the road for three miles, or all the way from the farmer's door back to the outskirts of the village, was a wide ribbon of white with a jet black band running down the centre, a band composed of famished and feeding crows. By ten o'clock there was no grain left. But by ten o'clock the sun was up, the storm wind had abated, the snow began to melt a bit on southward facing rocks, and the crows were saved.

After that, Jim did not go back to his pine to sleep alone. He was completely adopted into the band of three crows whose acquaintance he had first made, and became one of them. His period of loneliness was over.

THE BULB SHOW

I

Kate Green was standing by the sitting room window of her home, with a pot of lovely daffodils in her hand. They were her own, and she was very proud of them.

As she looked at the large blossoms, she felt quite sure that she would gain the first prize at the Bulb Show, to be held in her school next day.

Some time before, bulbs had been given to all the children; and they were told that prizes would be offered to the children in each class for the best pots of flowers.

Never before had there been such watching and watering. Every child wished to win a prize; and all the children liked tending the bulbs, even if theirs should not gain a prize.

Each day, some child would have something to tell. One morning, Janet Smith came to say that two little green spears were showing in her pot; and next day, Kate told them there were three in hers. Later on, other children said that leaves were coming up in their pots. There was quite a flower race among the children.

Now, the watching and waiting was all but over; and to-

morrow morning, the plants were to be taken to the school to be judged, and to be set out ready for the show.

There was to be no school that day. The older children were going to help the teachers with the flowers; and, in the afternoon, all were going to the show. The Boys'-School Band was to play most of the time.

A lady was coming to open the show; and, at four o'clock she was to give the prizes to the different prize-winners. Then all the children were to have tea in the Boys' School; and there was to be a Punch-and-Judy show in the evening; so that it was quite a grand day for the children.

Yet Kate did not seem very happy, as she stood by the window, looking at her pot of daffodils. Her little brother, Henry, was suffering from a sore throat, and had been crying and coughing all night.

The doctor had just been to see him; and Kate heard him say to her mother: "Give him plenty of milk and beef tea, and a few grapes. Good morning!" And off he went.

Mrs. Green shut the door, and said: "Grapes, and beef tea! I am too poor to buy grapes. It will be as much as I can do, to get milk for him, unless——"

She said no more; but she looked at the pot of daffodils, and Kate knew what she meant. If she would sell the daffodils, she could get enough money to buy half a pound, or even a pound, of grapes for her brother.

Poor child! She had counted so much on getting a prize; and it was so hard to give it up, after all her care and trouble.

Still, she loved her little brother, and she would do anything to help him. At last she put on her hat, wrapped a piece of paper round the pot of daffodils, and went down the road to the market.

When she reached the market, she made her way, through the rows of stalls, to the part where flowers were being offered for sale.

One of the flower-girls told her where to stand with her pot.

Soon a lady came by; and asked her the price of the daffodils.

"I don't know how much to ask for them," said Kate; "but I want enough money to buy a bunch of grapes."

"Are you fond of grapes?" asked the lady with a little laugh.

"Oh yes, I like them," said Kate; "but they are not for myself. I want to buy some for my little brother, who is very ill."

"I see," said the lady. "Then if I give you fifty cents will that be enough?"

"Yes, thank you, that will do nicely," said the girl. "I can get a basket of grapes with that."

Then, the lady asked where she got the daffodils. Kate told her all about the Bulb Show, and the pride that she had taken in her flowers.

The lady asked Kate's name, and where she lived, and the name of her school, and of her teacher. Next, she asked the child to carry the pot of daffodils home for her; and, when they got there, took her into the house. She gave the girl some grapes, and other nice things, for her brother and herself, and told her to keep the money for another time.

"I shall have the pot of daffodils on my dinner table to-night," said the lady; "and I shall think of the kind little girl, who did what she could for her sick brother."

Next afternoon, Kate went to the Bulb Show. When her little neighbors asked her where her daffodils were, she laughed, and said that a fairy had turned them into grapes.

She opened her eyes, however, when she saw the lady, who had bought her daffodils at the prize show. And she opened them still wider, when she heard her own name called:

"KATE GREEN.

FIRST PRIZE FOR DAFFODILS!"

It was no dream. The lady had asked the teachers about her: and, finding her story quite true, after using the daffodils on her dinner table, had sent them to the school, in the morning, to be judged with the rest.

* *The Bulb Show* from *The New Systematic Reader II*, published by Blackie and Son, Ltd. Reprinted by permission of the author and publisher.

THE STORY OF A LITTLE GRAIN OF WHEAT *

ONCE upon a time there was a little grain of Wheat. It was a tiny brown thing, quite hard and dry. It looked like somebody who had wrapped himself up in a cloak and gone to sleep, with his head and feet and all covered up. That was really what had happened. The grain of Wheat was fast asleep.

It lay outside a farm-yard gate, and a little black ant came along and saw it. "Dear me!" said the little black ant, "that will do nicely for my dinner." He was carrying it off—which was hard work, because it was nearly as big as he was—when another little black ant came along.

"I'll help you to carry that if you'll give me half," said the second ant. "Shan't!" said the first. Then, I am sorry to say, they fought about it.

While they were biting and kicking, and the grain of Wheat was rolling about between them, a third person came along.

The third person was a little Elf-man. He was looking

*By special permission The Oxford Press, London.

about for winter lodgings: and he had just found a capital place in a hollow tree at the edge of a field.

"Shocking! shocking!" said he to the two fighting ants. "Do stop, for goodness' sake!" But they did not take the least notice of him.

Then the little Elf-man thought, "If I take that grain of Wheat away, they won't have anything left to quarrel about!" And so he did.

The little Elf-man took the grain of Wheat very carefully home to his hollow tree. But when he arrived, it was all dark, because his tame glow-worm, that he kept for a candle, had felt lonely and gone out for a walk. He bumped his head trying to find things in the dark, and dropped the grain of Wheat; and it rolled out of the tree and down into a tiny chink of the earth.

The little Elf-man was dreadfully sorry at losing it, and scolded the glow-worm when it came home. He spent many hours searching for the grain next morning.

"What are you looking for?" said his friend the Dormouse. The Dormouse lived in a hole in the hedge-bank.

"For a grain I've lost," said the Elf.

"That's a Barley grain under that loose sod," remarked the Dormouse.

"That's not it, thank you," said the Elf-man. And he went on hunting; but he had no success. It was ever so deep down.

A good many days went by, and several things happened, —rain, and wind, and sunshine, and more rain, and snow, and frost, and rain again.

They all came down to where the little grain lay underground; and its nice brown cloak did not remain smooth and dry. It became damp and sodden and dirty. Its appearance was certainly not improved.

Now, if you got all wet and cold while you were asleep, supposing the wind and rain blew in on you, it would wake you up, most likely. So it fell out to the little grain of Wheat.

It woke up one day, inside its wet ragged cloak, and thrust out its small white feet. They were not like your feet, they were more like little roots—but they did very well for the Wheat. Its legs grew longer, week by week, and it grew more and more awake every day.

The more it waked, the less it liked being down there in the dark and cold. It thought, "Really, I can't say here all my life! There's nothing to look at!"

But whenever it wanted to poke its head up and peep out, the wind made it shiver and feel miserable. So it stayed where it was, and tried to be contented. One can always *try,* anyhow.

Meanwhile the little Barley-corn under the loose sod was getting on rather badly. You see, it had not been tucked cosily into the soil like the Wheat. It was like a poor little

vagrant with no proper place to sleep in. It grew, but very slowly.

"Hullo! is that you?" said the Dormouse, peeping in one day under the sod; "are you awake?"

"I don't think I've been properly to sleep," said the Barley-corn.

"Make haste and grow a little faster, and come out of that," said the Dormouse. "I should be rather fond of you if I thought you were taking trouble to get on."

"I think if any one were fond of me," whispered the Barley-corn, "I *should grow.*"

But the Dormouse was not listening.

At last a sunbeam came along the field—several sunbeams, in fact. They were quite bright and warm, and the little Elf-man, who had kept close indoors all the bad weather, opened his door and sat on the threshold basking. Then the sunbeams burrowed right down into the earth, and said: "Hurry up! Is anybody here for out-of-doors?"

You could not have heard them; their voices were not like ours. But the grain of Wheat heard them. At once it threw off the last rags of its tattered old cloak; and it was as clean and white as possible underneath. Then it pushed up its little green head, with a two-horned peaked cap on, and looked out curiously upon the world.

Everything was clear, and warm, and sunny, and perfectly

delightful. And there was the little Elf-man sitting on his threshold, in a *one*-horned peaky green cap.

"Well, I never!" said the Elf-man. "Who's this?"

"My name's Wheat," said the little green head.

"Then you've changed very much, let me tell you," said the Elf-man; "you are not a bit like what you were; but ever so much better."

"I hope I shall go on improving," said the Wheat politely. And that is just what it actually did.

But the poor Barley-corn was only beginning to push through under the loose sod by the time the Wheat was six inches high. It was thin and stunted, just as you would be if you had no proper food, and nobody to be fond of you.

The Wheat took no notice of it. But the Dormouse came now and then and said, "How slow you are!" The little Elf-man was rather sorry for it, but it did not occur to him to say so.

The little Elf-man came out every day, and talked to the Wheat while it grew. Very soon it was much bigger than he was; but this did not make him conceited.

"Did you have nice dreams while you were down below there?" he asked it.

"I only had one dream," said the Wheat, "but that went on all the time. I dreamed I was very tall and golden-yellow, and lived along with a crowd of brothers and sisters."

"Oh, but you didn't," said the Elf-man; "I found you all by yourself. You were a poor little lonely brown thing."

"I can't help it," said the Wheat: "that was my dream. And I have it now, sometimes, if I shut my eyes."

The little Elf-man was greatly puzzled: but the Wheat was now so tall that he did not like to contradict.

As for the little Barley-corn, nobody took the least interest in *his* dreams. He had very delightful ones, too. But they were the kind that never come true.

The summer went on, and all sorts of friends came and talked to the Wheat—birds, bees, and butterflies. He enjoyed himself more and more. The taller he grew, the better view he had of the rest of the world.

He had very pretty green clothes, which grew bigger as he did. This was a really useful arrangement: he never required to be measured for a new suit.

One day he said to the little Elf-man, "Do your clothes change colour?"

"No," replied the Elf-man, "I always wear green. Even in the winter I can find some blades of grass to weave together, or a few leaves to stitch up into a coat."

"You don't understand me," said the Wheat. "I mean, do they turn to a different colour while you're wearing them?"

"Not that I know of," said the Elf-man.

"Well, mine do," said the Wheat. "Just look!"

Sure enough, his green clothes were turning yellow, and he

was changing colour all over, too. He was very much altered altogether. It was most surprising.

"Goodness me!" said the little Elf-man.

"That's exactly what I think," said the Wheat.

About a month after this, the Elf-man was getting his breakfast ready,—an acorn-cup full of dew, and a drop of wild honey,—when he heard a loud, eager voice calling him. It was the Wheat, very much excited.

"I've had that dream several times lately," said the Wheat, rocking to and fro, "and now it has come true!"

"How do you mean?" asked the Elf-man.

"Can't you see?" said the Wheat. "I've turned golden-yellow from head to foot. And I have a whole family of children. They're not *my* brothers and sisters, of course, but they're each other's,—so it comes to the same thing. Dear, dear, how happy I do feel!" And it rocked more than ever.

"How many are there?" asked the Elf.

"About twenty, I should think," answered the Wheat, "but I can't count them without cricking my neck."

"Well, well!" said the little Elf. "It's a large family to look after. It reminds me of a little rhyme I once heard, about an old woman who lived in a shoe."

"The more the merrier," said the Wheat. "Hush, children! Don't all talk at once!" But the little grains would not stop talking all at once; and although *you* could not have

heard them—their voices were too tinkly and tiny—it was perfectly deafening to any one who could.

The Elf-man went back into his house and shut the door. Presently he had to put some cotton-willow-wool in his ears. The Wheat tried to sing its children to sleep with lullabies; but it did not know any.

"I shall never have a merry family like that, I'm afraid," said the Barley-corn to the Dormouse. The Barley-corn had hardly grown two inches since the spring. In fact, he was so little, you would hardly have known he was there.

"Never mind," said the Dormouse. "You have me to talk to you, haven't you?"

By and by the Wheat got very tired. Just think, if your mother had more than twenty children, who never stopped talking all day and all night! Anyhow, the Wheat could endure it no longer. So it called to the little Elf-man, and said, "Kindly fetch me the Dormouse. I can see him now, on the bank at the end of the field. He's beginning to get sleepy, too, so please make haste."

"What do you want me for?" said the Dormouse, when he was fetched. He and the Elf stood staring up at the tall Wheat. The little grains were quieter now. They had said nearly all they had to say.

"It's like this," said the Wheat in weary tones. "I can't rock these children to sleep up here. It's too light, and too draughty. They must be put to bed in the earth, as I was.

I'm sure it's the proper place for them." As the Wheat spoke, all the grains fell suddenly fast asleep.

"Well, I'm not a nurse," said the Dormouse, rather grumpily, because he had been disturbed. "And I can't climb your stalk and fetch them down, either."

"You must bite my stalk right through," said the Wheat, "so that we can all lie down together."

"Oh, that will hurt you dreadfully!" cried the little Elf-man.

"Then it will have to hurt, that's all," said the Wheat. "It's the only thing to do. Be quick!"

The little Elf-man threw his arms round the Wheat's yellow-stalk, and wept. But the Dormouse, with his sharp little teeth, bit through the stalk, just where it came out of the ground. The Wheat gave one great rock—and one sigh—and SNAP!—down it came. All the little grains tumbled out of their cradles, and rolled into chinks of the soil.

The tall Wheat, as it lay in the earth, said "Thank you!" in a husky voice to the Dormouse, and "Good-bye!" to the little Elf-man. The wind blew it away that night, and nobody ever saw it again.

"Where's the Barley?" asked the Dormouse next day. But the poor Barley was quite shrivelled up.

The little Elf-man was sad for nearly a week. But when all the little grains woke up the following spring, he had a jollier time than ever.

THE LEGEND OF TRAILING ARBUTUS

The bleak wind swept across the great lakes and piled snowdrift all around a wigwam which stood at the edge of a pine forest. An Indian pulled aside a curtain of wolf-skin and stood listening in the doorway of his rude house. His dark eyes were fixed on the richly-tinted western sky. Long hair white as the frost fell about his bent shoulders and framed a thin dark face deeply lined with wrinkles.

"I thought I heard footsteps," he muttered in a weak voice. He drew a deerskin mantle close about his shoulders, turned from the doorway and sat down on a mat of beaver fur which lay before a few dying embers. A shiver ran through his gaunt figure. He stirred the smouldering ashes and threw some dried sticks into the small flame.

"How weak and weary I am to-night," he thought. "What has become of the hunter's game? I could find none in the forest to-day." His head drooped forward and he fell asleep.

At sunrise he was aroused by a flood of light in the wigwam. He looked up and saw standing in the doorway a beautiful maiden, clad in a robe of sweet-grass and ferns. Her moccasins were made of velvet mosses, and the fairest blos-

soms were entwined in her long dark hair. She carried an armful of budding twigs.

"Who art thou?" cried the old man.

"I am the Spring Manito," she answered, merrily.

"Then thou wilt perish here," said the old man, "for alas! I have no cheer to offer thee!"

"Art thou the great Winter Manito?" asked the maiden.

"I am the great Winter Manito! Thou hast no doubt heard of my power. At my command the North Wind rushes madly through the forest and the giant trees bow before him as he twists and tears their branches."

"Cruel Manito," sighed the maiden, but the old man did not hear her.

"I cover the pine-trees with sleet and drive the birds southward. With my sceptre of ice I silence the brooks and rivers. My breath turns the dew into frost. I shake my locks and a face-cloth of snow covers the withered leaves and blossoms. Mighty is the Winter Manito!"

"Mighty is the Winter Manito," repeated the Maiden, sadly. "But my power is greater than his!"

"What meanest thou?" asked the old man quickly.

"At my call the soft breezes from the South caress the trees and heal the wounds the Winter Manito has made. My warm breath turns the frost into dew; my golden wand melts the frozen streams and the waters flow again toward the sea. I shake my tresses and the gentle rain falls; then the velvet

buds burst forth and the birds hasten back to build their nests and to sing in the leafy branches. Where I walk in the fields and meadows the grass and blossoms spring forth to greet me. The children of the red men rejoice in the beauty which I bring to gladden the earth. The Winter Manito is mighty but his is the power of cruelty; the Spring Manito is strong, and hers is the strength of kindness. The Winter Manito's sceptre is the biting frost; his rule brings pain and death; the Spring Manito bears the golden wand of sunshine and her hand-maidens bring joy and life."

As she spoke the maiden noticed that the old man grew weaker and weaker until he finally sank down on the floor of his lodge. A flood of sunshine filled the wigwam. The Winter Manito grew smaller and smaller until he disappeared. Then the old man's tent faded away and left the maiden standing under a tree. The sunshine had melted the snow-drifts, and a warm breeze was blowing.

The maiden stooped down and brushed away the dried leaves which had lain all winter under the snow. Then she enamelled the brown earth about her feet with star-like blossoms, pink and white, and shining green leaves.

"My precious Arbutus," she whispered, bending low, "thou art born to bring joy to the children of the red men and thou shalt trail after me through the pine-forest and over the distant hilltops."

She moved quickly through the woods and across the

meadows. "Spring has come," whispered the trees and flowers. "Spring has come," sang the birds. Wherever she stepped the lovely Arbutus trailed after her on its delicate rosy vine and scented the air with sweetest fragrance.

A GREAT FAMILY

It was a lovely day in May, and the Dandelion family that lived near the big gate were lifting their pretty golden heads to greet the sun. Here and there a grandfather or grandmother Dandelion stood crowned with silver, and, let us whisper it softly, one or two were quite bald, for a playful little breeze had sent their hair a-sailing, and he chuckled at his joke, the naughty breeze.

Now one grandmother stood upon a little knoll, and so was much taller than the rest. Indeed, she was the chief grandmother of the family, and much respected for her wisdom. And she was very handsome and stately, holding her graceful silver head high above the others.

"A story, a story," coaxed her grandchildren, turning their eager faces toward her. Some of them were tiny buds, but they all begged for a story.

"No, children, no," she replied, in a sweet, grandmotherly tone. "Really, my dears, you have had far more stories than are good for you, and I must not let you grow up uneducated. I think we will have a short lesson in family history."

The little Dandelions sighed.

"Now," she went on, "how many of you know why we are called Dandelions?"

And—will you believe it?—not one stupid little Dandelion could answer!

"That is just what I expected," said grandmother, sternly, eyeing them over her glasses. "My, my! this is very sad!"

Then one little Dandelion, prompted by his mother, said he supposed it had something to do with dandies, while another bright little thing lisped out that she guessed it was because they were as fierce as lions.

"No, no!" and grandmother shook her head so briskly a silver hair went flying.

"Look at your leaves," she said kindly, "and observe the edges. Learn to notice, florets: learn to notice."

"The edges are pointed like sharp teeth, please, grandmother," half whispered one bashful little fellow.

"Exactly," said grandmother, proceeding learnedly; "our name is from the Latin, *dens leonis*, meaning lion's tooth, but our botanical name is Taraxacum."

"Oh, my!" sighed the little buds, for they didn't understand a word of it.

"Our roots have healing properties, and they are employed in making medicine, while our leaves are used in the spring for food; so we are useful as well as ornamental." And the grandmother beamed with pride.

"But, children, you must also know that we belong to the great and noble family of *Compositæ*."

"Oh, dear!" gasped the little Dandelions.

"Now you know composite means made up of many parts; that is, each blossom is made up of many little florets. Study each other's heads and you will understand my meaning. Now in this great family of *Compositæ* there are many, many flowers besides the Dandelions. In fact, my children, we have over nine thousand relatives. Sunflowers, marigolds, asters, goldenrod, boneset, tansy, lettuce, and the daisy—all these belong to our family. Not only are we many, but we have the famous and the great among us—the thistle, royal flower of Scotland; the cornflower of Germany; the chrysanthemum, the emblem of brave little Japan—all these are composite flowers, our royal relatives."

The Dandelion family wildly applauded, and grandmother graciously bowed her acknowledgment.

"But, my children," she went on, "I would not have you forget we have also black sheep in the family—Spanish needles, ragweed, bitterweed, and beggar ticks; these, too, we must own, even though we bow our heads in shame. But so it is in all great families."

Just at this moment the gardener came whirring along with the lawnmower, and alas and alack, not a single Dandelion was left to tell the tale!

But the little winged seeds from grandmother's silver crown sailed away, carrying wisdom, I doubt not, to many another Dandelion family.

HOW THE BIRDS CAME

An Indian Legend

"Many years ago," says the old Indian Grandmother, "the Great Spirit visited the earth. As he walked over valley and hill he said, 'It is all beautiful and good. But the Great Spirit loves the trees best. See how they make the hills and valleys radiant with their green. Earth would be fairer still,' said the Great Spirit, 'if there were trees everywhere. I would have great forests cover the mountain sides. I would see trees as far as my eye can reach across the land. I would have a tree spring up wherever my foot touches the earth!' And it was as the Great Spirit wished. As he wandered up and down the mountains and valleys and across the plains, little trees sprang up in his footsteps, until the whole earth, like the hills and valleys, was radiant in green. 'The Great Spirit loves the little trees best,' he said, when he looked upon them. 'Little trees, I will watch over you and guard you. I will send gentle rains that you may have water to drink. I will send my warm sun to shine upon you. And you must grow and grow and grow.' All summer long the Great Spirit cared for them, and when the first summer had passed and the win-

ter came, the little trees had grown until they spread their branches far and wide.

"But one autumn day a great change came over the radiant green. All the leaves on the trees turned to beautiful colours—red, yellow, brown, gold. 'They are beautiful, beautiful,' said the Great Spirit. 'My trees have never been so beautiful before.'

"As he spoke a gentle wind stirred the branches and the Great Spirit saw the leaves drop from the trees, flutter through the air and fall to the ground.

" 'See,' he exclaimed, 'the leaves of my trees fall to the earth where they will wither and die. This shall not be. Behold, my leaves, I am the Great Spirit. I will give you breath and strength. You shall not die—you shall live forever.'

"He breathed softly upon the coloured leaves. In a moment hundreds of leaves moved, then fluttered, then flew away—a flock of beautiful birds. The red-brown oak leaves became robins; all the yellow and gold leaves became yellow birds. The red-maple leaves flew away beautiful red birds, while the withered brown leaves scattered around, sprang up sparrows and larks."

The Indian Grandmother says that is how we got our first birds, and that is why the birds love the trees and always live among them.

OUT OF THE NEST

ONCE upon a time a mother bird and father bird built a nest in a tree. It was made of straw and leaves and all sorts of wonderful things, and even had lace trimmings on it.

Soon after the nest was finished, the mother bird put two eggs in it, and then she and the father bird thought of nothing but keeping those eggs safe and warm. Mother bird sat on them day and night; and even when father bird would say, "You really must fly about a little and let me take care of the eggs," she did not like to leave them.

After a while two little birds came out of the shells, which was just what she had been hoping for all the time. The baby birds were both so weak and small that they could do nothing at all for themselves but open their mouths very wide and call, "Peep, peep! mother, dear, peep!" Mother bird and father bird were busy all day getting them something to eat. By and by they began to grow, and then they had soft feather clothes to wear, which are the best clothes in the world for baby birds.

Mother bird said to them one day, "You are almost ready to learn to fly"; and then they felt very large. That same

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day mother bird and father bird flew away together to get something for dinner; and while they were gone the little birds heard a very queer noise which seemed to come from a pond near the tree. This is the way it sounded: "Kerchunk! Kerchunk!"

"Oh! what can it be?" said the sister bird. "I'll peep over the side of the nest and see," said her brother. But when he put his head out he could see nothing although he heard the sound very plainly: "Kerchunk! Kerchunk!" Then he leaned out a little farther and a little farther, till his head was dizzy. "Peep, peep! You'll fall!" cried the sister bird; and, sure enough, she had scarcely said it before he tumbled out of the nest, down, down to the ground! He was not hurt, but, oh, how frightened he was! "Peep, peep! mother, dear, peep!" he cried. "Peep!" cried the sister bird up in the nest, but the mother and father were too far away to hear their calls.

The brother bird hopped about on the ground and looked around him. He was near the pond now, and the sound was very loud: "Kerchunk! Kerchunk!" "Peep, peep, peep!" called the birdie, and in a moment up hopped a big frog. This was an old school-teacher frog, and he had been teaching all the little frogs to sing. "Kerchunk! Kerchunk!" said he. "How can I teach my frogs to sing when you are making such a noise?"

"Peep, peep! I want my mamma," said the baby bird.

Then the frog saw how young the birdie was, and he was very sorry for him. "Come with me," he said, "and I will teach you to sing." But the baby bird cried louder than ever at this, and a mother dove, who was singing her babies to sleep in a neighbouring tree, flew down to see what could be the matter.

"I can't begin to get my children to sleep in all this fuss," she said to the frog, but when she saw the little bird she was just as sorry as the frog had been. "Poor, dear baby," she cried. "I will fly right off and find your mamma for you." So she told her children to be good and quiet, and then away she flew. Before long she met the father and mother, and they all came back in a great hurry. Then they tried to get the baby bird into the nest again.

"He is entirely too young to be out of the nest," cried his mother, "and he must get in again at once." "Spread your wings and fly, as I do," said the father bird. So the baby bird spread his wings and tried to fly; but, try as he would, he could not reach the nest in the tree.

"Put him into my school, and I will teach him to swim," said the frog; "that is better than flying, and a great deal easier to learn, I am sure." This was so kind of the frog that the mother bird thanked him; but she said she had to be very careful with her children, and that she was afraid the water might give the little bird a cold. While they were talking,

they heard somebody coming along, whistling the jolliest tune!

"Dear me! Dear me!" cried the birds. "There comes a boy!" "He's apt to have stones in his pocket," said the frog. "He will carry my darling off and put him in a cage! Oh, fly! fly!" begged the mother bird. But before the baby bird even had time to say, "Peep!" the boy came in sight.

Then the father bird flew over the boy's head and the mother bird down in front of him. The frog croaked and the dove cooed, but none of them could hide the little bird from him. "If you hurt him, I'll peck your eyes out!" cried the poor mother, who hardly knew what she was saying; but the boy picked the little bird up, just as if he did not hear her. "Oh, what shall I do?" cried the mother bird.

Then the boy looked at her and at the tree where the nest was. "Coo, coo, coo! I think I know what he is going to do," said the dove. "There's no telling," croaked the frog; and they all watched and wondered, while the boy put the bird in his pocket and began to climb the tree. He swung himself from branch to branch, climbing higher all the time, until at last he reached the pretty nest where the sister bird waited for her mother to come home.

Mother bird and father bird flew to the top of the tree to watch the boy. "Suppose he should take her, too," said the mother bird. But what do you think he did? Yes, indeed.

He put the brother bird back in the nest, as well as the mother bird could have done it herself.

"Thank you! Thank you!" sang the mother and father as the boy scrambled down again. "Peep, peep! Thank you!" called the little birds from the nest. "Coo, coo! I knew," cried the dove. "Kerchunk! Kerchunk! I should like to have him in my school," said the frog, as he hopped away to his pond.

THE STORY OF BLUE-WINGS

THERE was once an old apple-orchard. It was full of beautiful things. In the spring the trees were covered with pink and white blossoms, while the soft green grass was springled with dandelions. In the autumn the fruit was scarlet, and beneath the trees the grass, which had grown high and feathery, waved in the wind.

But there was something else in the orchard which was more wonderful than the grass or the dandelions, the blossoms or the fruit. Sometimes early in the spring there was a sudden flash of blue wings above the trees, then a bird's song, so clear and sweet and joyous that it made us think of blue skies and of dancing blue waves. It came from the owner of those splendid blue wings, and we knew that the king of the orchard had returned from his winter's trip, the bluebird had come home.

High up in an old tree there was a little hole and there the bluebird made his nest. From the outside the hole looked dark and hard, but inside it was as soft and cosy as the prettiest nest in the world. It was lined with bits of feathers and down and it was quite big, plenty big enough for the bluebird

and his wife. Her feathers were not as bright as his nor her song as beautiful, but she could do something even more marvellous than wearing bright feathers or singing joyous songs. She could lay eggs.

And so she laid five small, bluish eggs in that cozy home. Then she sat on them, keeping them warm with her soft little body, while the father bird flashed his splendid wings back and forth through the orchard, bringing food to the little mother bird and singing his happy song, happier than ever now that he could tell of those precious eggs.

At last the shells went "crack," and five little baby birds opened their big bills very wide and chirped for food. Then how busy their father and mother were kept!

I have not time to tell you all that happened during the summer, when the young ones learned to fly, learned too a few notes of that song which makes us think of the sky and the sea. None of them were as beautiful as their father, none of their songs were as perfect, but their mother told them to have patience, to try hard to fly straight, and to sing clearly, and then, perhaps, after their winter in the warm South, they would come back to the orchard with wings that would flash, and with a song that would be like the first joyous call of the spring time.

And so, when the first cold weather came, four of the young birds flew away with their mother and father. But one was left behind! Poor little bird, I do not know whether

he had fallen from a tree or been hit by a stone. I only know that one wing was broken, and he lay on the hard ground, his blue feathers dull, his eyes dim.

There a little girl found him, and she lifted him tenderly and carried him through the orchard to the white farm house beyond. She laid the poor little creature in a big wooden cage, and fed him with bread crumbs soaked in water until his eyes grew brighter and he tried to lift his wings. But when he found that he could not, because one was broken, you know, he gave a chirp of pain and huddled down forlornly on the floor of the cage. But soon, with all this care, he grew strong again, even if he could not fly, and he and the little girl had nice times together. The door of the cage was always open and Blue-wings, that is the name the child gave him, although his feathers were not so very blue, would hop down to the table and around the room, always ending by lighting on the little girl's shoulder. He would eat from her hand, and sometimes he gave little chirps which meant "thank you."

He had never sung since the day when he had tried to raise his wings and had dropped them in pain. Sometimes he dreamed of the orchard, of flying swiftly through the trees and of singing joyous songs to greet the sunshine. Then he would open his eyes and see the cosy kitchen and his dear little girl friend, and he would hop down sadly and sit on her

shoulder, trying to forget his longings, trying to chirp cheerfully when she gave him crumbs.

As the winter passed and the days grew warm and bright, Blue-wings found himself dreaming of his old free life most of the time, and between the dreams the longing to fly and sing was stronger than ever. One day the window next his cage was left wide open and through it the soft south wind brought the fragrance of the apple blossoms, and the whir and hum of the little creatures who were busy greeting the spring time. Suddenly Blue-wings felt as if he must fly and sing or his heart would break. And then—was it a dream, he wondered—he lifted his wings and flew right out of the window. Through the orchard he darted, above the blossoming trees, his blue wings flashing in the sunshine. Even his father's wings were not as splendidly blue as his, and they were so strong!

It was no dream now, he knew; it was all true. And as he mounted higher and higher he sang a song so clear and sweet and joyful that the farmer ploughing in the field stopped, and listened with tears in his eyes. Blue-wing's song made him think of the tossing sea he had lived beside when he was a boy. And the little girl heard it, as she stood at the farmhouse door, and she stood smiling up into the blue sky with thoughts of angels in her heart.

"Did Blue-wings ever come back to the little girl," you ask? He never came back to the cage or the farm-house

kitchen, but he lived in the orchard and had a nest there. And whenever the child saw a wonderfully blue glimmer through the branches, or heard a most beautiful bird's song, she knew that Blue-wings was near. And she remembered that it was through her love and her care that he had lived and grown strong, able to take his place as king of the orchard, able by his song to bring into people's hearts happiness too great for words.

THE STORY OF A BEAVER*

I

A broad, flat tail came down on the water with a whack that sent the echoes flying back and forth across the pond, and its owner ducked his head, arched his back, and dived to the bottom. It was a very curious tail, for besides being so oddly paddle-shaped it was covered with what looked like scales, but were really sections and indentations of hard, horny, blackish-gray skin. Except its owner's relations, there was no one else in all the animal kingdom who had one like it. But the strangest thing about it was the many different ways in which he used it. Just now it was his rudder—and a very good rudder, too.

In a moment his little brown head reappeared, and he and his brothers and sisters went chasing each other round and round the pond, ducking and diving and splashing, raising such a commotion that they sent the ripples washing all along the grassy shores, and having the jolliest kind of time. When the youngsters wanted a change, they climbed upon a log, and nudged and hunched each other, poking their noses into one another's fat little sides, each trying to shove his brother or sister back into the water.

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By and by they scrambled out on the bank, and then, when their fur had dripped a little, they set to work to comb it. Up they sat on their hind legs and tails—the tail was a stool now, you see—and scratched their heads and shoulders with the long brown claws of their small, black, hairy hands. Then the hind feet came up, one at a time, and combed and stroked their sides till the moisture was gone and the fur was soft and smooth and glossy as velvet.

After that they had to have another romp. They were not half as graceful on land as they had been in the water. In fact they were not graceful at all, and the way they stood around on their hind legs, and shuffled and pranced and wheeled like baby hippopotamuses, and slapped the ground with their tails, was one of the funniest sights in the heart of the woods. And the funniest and liveliest of them all was the one whom I shall now call the Beaver—with a big B.

The first year of his life was an easy one, especially the winter, when there was little for anyone to do except eat, sleep, and now and then fish for the roots of the yellow waterlily in the soft mud at the bottom of the pond. During that season he probably accomplished more than his parents did; for, if he could not toil, he could at least grow.

But later, on a dark autumn night, behold the young Beaver working with might and main. His parents have felled a tree, and it is his business to help them cut up the best portions and carry them home. He gnaws off a small branch,

seizes the butt end between his teeth, swings it over his shoulder, and makes for the water, keeping his head twisted around to the right or left so that the end of the branch may trail on the ground behind him.

Sometimes he even rises on his hind legs, and walks almost upright, with his broad, strong tail for a prop to keep him from tipping over backward if his load happens to catch on something. Arriving at the canal or at the edge of the pond, he jumps in and swims for town, still carrying the branch over his shoulder, and finally leaves it on the growing pile in front of his father's lodge.

These were his first tasks. Later on he learned to fell trees himself. Standing on his hind legs and tail, with his hands braced against the trunk, he would hold his head sidewise, open his mouth wide, set his teeth against the bark, and bring his jaws together with a savage nip that left a deep gash in the side of the tree. A second nip deepened the gash, and gave it more of a downward slant, and two or three more carried it still further into the tough wood.

Then he would choose a new spot a little farther down, and start a second gash, which was made to slant up toward the first. And when he thought that they were both deep enough he would set his teeth firmly in the wood between them, and pull and jerk and twist at it until he had wrenched out a chip —a chip perhaps two inches long, and from an inch to a quarter of an inch thick.

Chip after chip was torn out in this way, and gradually he worked around the tree until he had completely encircled it. Then the groove was made deeper. Little by little he dug away the tree's flesh until there was nothing left but its heart, and it began to creak and rend. The Beaver jumped aside to get out of the way, and hundreds of small, tender branches, and delicious little twigs and buds came crashing down where he could cut them off and eat them or carry them away at his leisure.

One night the Beaver came swimming down the pond, homeward bound; and, as he dived and approached the submarine entrance of the lodge, he noticed some stakes driven into the mud—stakes that had never been there before. They seemed to form two rows, one on each side of his course, but as there was room enough for him to pass between them he swam straight ahead without stopping.

His hands had no webs between the fingers, and were of little use in swimming, so he had folded them back against his body; but his big feet were working like the wheels of a twin-screw steamer, and he was forging along at a great rate. Suddenly, halfway down the line of stakes, his breast touched the pan of a steel trap, and the jaws flew up quick as a wink and strong as a vise. Fortunately there was nothing that they could take hold of. They struck him so hard that they lifted him bodily upward, but they caught only a few hairs.

A week later, however, he was really caught and lost his

right hand. By the time the Beaver's wound was healed—Nature was good to him, and the skin soon grew over the torn stump—the pond was covered with ice. The beavers, only half as numerous as they had been a few weeks before, kept close in their lodges and burrows, and for a time they lived in peace and quiet, and their numbers suffered no futher diminution. Then the trapper began to set his traps through the ice, and before long matters were worse than ever. By spring the few beavers that remained were so thoroughly frightened that the ancient town was abandoned forever. The lodges fell to ruins, the burrows caved in, the dam gave way, the pond and canals were drained, and that was the end of the city.

The next city that claimed the honor of being our Beaver's home was a brand-new one. Let us see how it had its beginning. The beaver got married about the time he left his old home. Except for his missing hand, his wife was so like him that it would have puzzled you to tell which was which. Do you want to know what they looked like? They measured about three feet, six inches, from tip of nose to tip of tail, and they weighed perhaps thirty pounds apiece.

Their bodies were heavy and clumsy, and were covered with thick, soft, grayish under-fur, which in turn was overlaid with longer hairs of a glistening chestnut-brown, making a coat that was thoroughly waterproof as well as very beautiful. Their heads were somewhat like those of gigantic rats,

with small, light brown eyes, little round ears covered with hair, and long orange-colored incisors looking out from between parted lips. One portrait will answer for both of them.

They wandered about for some time, looking for a suitable location, and examining several spots along the beds of various little rivers, none of which seemed to be just right. But at last they found, in the very heart of the wilderness, a place where a shallow stream ran over a hard stony bottom, and here they set to work. Alder bushes laid lengthwise of the current were the first materials used, and for a time the water filtered through them with hardly a pause. Then the beavers began laying mud and stones and moss on this brush foundation, scooping them up with their hands, and holding them under their chins as they waddled or swam to the dam.

The first year the beavers did not try to raise the stream more than a foot above its original level. There was much other work to be done—a house to be built, and food to be laid in for the winter—and if they spent too much time on the dam they might freeze or starve before spring. A few rods upstream was a grassy point which the rising waters had transformed into an island, and here they built their lodge, a hollow mound of sticks and mud, with a small, cave-like chamber in the center, from which two tunnels led out under the pond.

The walls were masses of earth and wood and stones, so thick and solid that even a man with an axe would have found it difficult to penetrate them. Only at the very apex of the

mound there was no mud, nothing but tangled sticks through which a breath of fresh air found its way now and then. In all other respects the house was neat and clean. The floor was only two or three inches above the level of the water in the tunnels, and would naturally have been a bed of mud; but they mixed little twigs with it, and stamped and pounded it down till it was hard and smooth. With the ends of projecting sticks cut off to leave the walls even and regular, and with long grass carried in to make the beds, the lodge was finished and ready.

Five babies came in May, and they were very pretty children—about as large as rats, and covered with thick, soft, silky, reddish-brown fur, but without any of the longer, coarser, chestnut-colored hairs that formed their parents' outer coats. They were very playful, too, as the father and mother had been in their own youthful days. The old beavers brought in little twigs for them, about the size of leadpencils; and if you had been there, and your eyes had been sharp enough to pierce the gloom you might have seen the youngsters exercising their brand-new teeth, and learning to sit up and hold sticks in their baby hands while they ate the bark.

And wouldn't you have liked to be present on the night when they first went swimming down the long dark tunnel; and, rising to the surface, looked around on their world of woods and water—on the quiet pond, with its glassy smoothness broken only by their own ripples; on the tall trees, lift-

ing their fingers toward the sky; and on the stars, marching silently across the heavens, and looking down with still, unwinking eyes on another family of babies that had come to live and love and be happy for a little while on God's earth?

Only once that year did a man come to town, and then he did not do anything very dreadful. He was not a trapper, he was only an amateur naturalist who wanted to see the beavers at their work, and who thought he was smart enough to catch them at it. His plan was simple enough. He made a breach in the dam one night, and then climbed a tree and waited for them to come and mend it. It was bright moonlight, and he thought he would see the whole thing and learn some wonderful secrets.

The Beaver was at work in the woods not very far away, and presently he came down to the edge of the pond, rolling a heavy birch cutting before him. He noticed at once that the water was falling, and he started straight for the dam to see what was the matter. The amateur naturalist saw him coming, a dark speck moving swiftly down the pond, with a long V-shaped ripple spreading out behind him like the flanks of a flock of wild geese. But the Beaver was doing some thinking while he swam. He had never before known the water to fall so suddenly and rapidly; there must be a very bad break in the dam.

How could it have happened? It looked suspicious. It looked very suspicious indeed; and just before he reached the

dam he stopped to reconnoiter, and at once caught sight of the naturalist up in the tree. His tail rose in the air and came down with the loudest whack that had ever echoed across the pond, a stroke that sent the spray flying in every direction, and that might have been heard three quarters of a mile away. His wife heard it, and paused in her work of felling a tree; the children heard it, and the neighbors heard it; they all knew it meant business.

The Beaver dived like a loon and swam for dear life, and he did not come to the surface again till he had reached the farther end of the pond and was out of sight behind a grassy point. There he stayed, now and then striking the water with his tail as a signal that the danger was not yet over. The naturalist roosted in the tree till his teeth were chattering and he was fairly blue with cold, and then he scrambled down and went back to his camp. He decided that watching beavers wasn't very interesting, anyhow—hardly worth the trouble it cost.

In the following year the population was increased to eighteen, for six more babies arrived in our Beaver's lodge, and four in his neighbors' lodge. In another twelve-month the first five were old enough to build lodges and found homes of their own; and so the city grew, and our Beaver and his wife were the original inhabitants, the first settlers, the most respected of all the citizens.

MAPLE-SUGARING

"It is time to tap the trees," said our father; "I think the sap will run." All that day he sawed elder sticks, in foot lengths, and pushed out the pith. These, when sharpened, made excellent troughs to conduct the sap into pans and buckets. Early the next morning, while the frost held the ground, we loaded a stone-boat with all sorts of pans and pails and with the elder spiles that we had made, and with them we took an auger and a mallet. The sun came out warm in the glen, but a sharp north wind slipped over the hill occasionally, to remind us that March was not quite ready to leave the scene. It was the time when winter and spring are wrestling.

"Ah," said our father, as he blew on his fingers, "winter dislikes to let go." Then he began to bore holes in the south side of the great maple tree—two hundred years old—and we boys drove in the spiles and set the pans. The sweet juice began at once to ooze out through the elder sticks and then to drop into the buckets. I can hear it now! That first drop, drop, against the tin! Out of a few of the larger trees, in the warm hollows, where the wind could not find its way, the sap

spurted in little streams. The bees came from their hives and flew about our heads, alighting on the chips to get a taste of the sweets. A butterfly flitted, and tasted, and flew again to find a sweeter chip or perhaps a safer spot.

"Boys," said father, "it is time to swing the kettle, for with this run we must begin to boil before night." To be sure! For the pans were nearly full by noon, as we ourselves were half full of the sweet stuff—and we could smell the boiling sugar in our anticipation. Down in the very heart of the glen we drove strong crotched sticks; and across these we laid a stout ash pole. On this the ten-pail iron kettle was hung with a double hook. There were no patent evaporators in those days; but that did not worry us; our sugar should be the best. Little Tom ran to the house, which was a quarter of a mile away, with two pieces of hemlock bark to bring us coals. For in all the world there was not at that time a single match! Did we not by "match-making" mean making a very different thing? But you should have seen how well nature cared for us without matches. By order of Providence hemlock bark curled up just enough to hold a dozen big maple coals, and these another bark would cover from the wind. We had already gathered bunches of dry grass, with dry twigs, and more hemlock bark. I can smell it to this day—the delicious resin as it touched the coal! Then Jim quickly took the coals and blew them with all his might. It was a critical moment, and it needed a deal of breath. First, a single thread

of smoke came out and wound its way inquiringly up into the air; then a puff of smoke blew out straight into the eyes of Jim; and other puffs, one after another, into every other eager pair of eyes that bent over the problem. Bless me, how does smoke know so much? Jim's face was in a whirling cloud and his eyes became watery, but he would not be beaten. At last a red jet—a flash—a little hesitation—more rolls of smoke—and then the flames burst up and grappled with the bark and sticks. Yes, indeed! now it understood what was wanted. Maple-sugar time had come, and sap must be boiled. The fire had business on hand.

Our father shouted cheerily from the top of the hill: "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" "Yes!" we answered; and now we are ready to gather the sap. Each one first stood himself in the middle of a huge hoop which lay on the top of two pails, held apart so that they could not swing against the legs of the bearer. Then we went from tree to tree and emptied the pans into our pails. When these were full, they were emptied into the kettle over the fire. It was not light work, but it was work full of good cheer; for what would not a boy do to get at plenty of maple sugar! Soon another kettle was swung, and into that we dipped the thickening sap, while we still poured fresh sap into the first kettle. Work should never go alone; and as for fun, it cannot go alone. Let them go together, I say; that is the true way.

The woodpeckers were also tapping the trees—the red-headed and the yellow-throated—and they came very close to us; for no woodpecker fears a human being. Why should he? Is he not doing us good service, pulling the grubs from the trees? It must have been the second morning that a robin's song was heard—clear, glorious, triumphant, and far-reaching. I do not doubt that song was the echo of one to the south, a mile away or more; and that a whole chain of singers—a complete line of couriers—reached to the flocks in the southern states. But of that we did not have time to think. All we cared for was the grand fact that the robins had come back again. And while we were in the excitement over our redbreast, came up the swale, a thin, fine, silvery note, from the first bluebird—it was just as far away as the ear could catch it.

The kettle of thickest syrup was needing a good deal of attention. Jim was frequently dropping in a bit of colder material to prevent it from boiling over. It would rise in a mass of deep chocolate-colored bubbles which often reached nearly to the top, but Jim understood that it must not boil over.

About noon the little mother appeared, winding about the knoll into the glen, with a basket on her arm nearly as big as herself. The robins sang harder than ever, and the woodpecker rapped for order. Jim ran to meet her and to carry the basket, while Tom and I lugged a dry log near the fire for a seat. "Well," said she, catching her breath, "this is

work; this is earning your bread and salt; and you shall have it more and more." And then she looked up at the birds, and said, "And you, too, you little darlings! You shall have your dinners." Then she gave half a dozen bones for us to tie to the trees where the birds might peck at them—nor were the bones without meat. The squirrels came into the branches overhead, and, looking down curiously, said, "Cht! Cht! Cht!" "To be sure," said the little mother, "and you, too." Just then our uncles, Platt and George, also appeared in the distance, with another basket between them—and it was clear enough, as far as you could see them, that Uncle George was growling. What, what, a quarter of a mile on gouty feet, and all for a little maple sugar! Why not let the world alone. On top of the little mother's basket was a nicely folded table-cloth. Why is it a woman can never eat without a white cloth under her food? So it is; but for me I prefer green, like the sod. While the cloth was spread over a great stump, Uncle George uncovered two dozen eggs. " 'Tis all the hens have laid," said my Uncle Platt, "and I shall have none for Easter." " 'Tis just enough," said my Uncle George. Then, hopping about on his gouty feet, he tumbled them all into the kettle of boiling syrup. Ah, but you should always boil your eggs in maple syrup! At last the little mother called out: "Come, father, let go the sugar, and eat!" There on the stump, and on a great log that we boys straddled, were sandwiches and doughnuts and sliced ham, and there were the eggs that my Uncle George

skimmed out of the boiling syrup and gave to us as fast as we could eat them. The squirrels were coming closer and closer; and at last one jumped squarely down on the log beside Jim, and took a bit of his bread. "It's fair," said Jim, "and you shall have more." And the squirrel sat up on his hind legs and said, in pretty good English: "Welcome; glad to see you!" So the family were all together, and everybody ate to his heart's desire. When all were satisfied, the little mother loosed her apron-strings, and then looked about in triumph—as much as to say: "What would you do with your tapping and your boiling, if it were not for me? Indeed! But now I have set all things right; go on with your work of boring holes and carrying sap!" Then she went back to the house.

Every night the syrup was taken in buckets to the house. There it was turned over to the little mother, who cleansed it and then boiled it down until it became sugar. If you would have the sugar a beautiful white, you should cleanse it with a pint of milk, after breaking into it a half-dozen eggs. Then you must swing your kettle over the fire. As the boiling begins, the impurities will rise to the surface, and you may skim them into a pan for the vinegar barrel. All sugar waste must go to the vinegar; that is, there must be no waste at all—this is household economy.

"The scum is rising white, little mother." So it is; and now, little ones, you shall have a saucerful, each one of you, and you shall be quiet. Half an hour of expert watchfulness

prevents the rich brown mass from boiling over. Every ounce of white scum is saved for making cookies—except, indeed, that which goes for making boys. Now the bubbles, large and expressive, fill the great kettle, and they can hardly be restrained from jumping over into the fire. The kettle is swung a little off the centre of the blaze. Every two minutes a spoonful is given to each boy to stir in a saucer.

"Yes, indeed, little mother, it ropes!" Then the little mother lifts it six inches, and, with exacting eye, pours it slowly into a pan of snow. No, it does not grain! No, it does not wax! But it does rope. Little threads of syrup fly off into the air as the substance falls from the spoon.

Another three minutes, and "It waxes, it waxes!" This is the golden period of "sugaring off." The delicious mass, as it falls upon snow and is stirred, forms a waxy substance, which, once tasted, will never be forgotten. Every stage of the process requires that each boy shall test and taste it, especially when it waxes. Three minutes more and a spoonful, when stirred in a saucer, hardens and grains. This is the critical moment! Swing the kettle clear of the fire! Set it firmly on the hearth! And now the boys by turn must stir it with all their might. It will take two hours of vigorous work before the light brunette will become a beautiful blonde. Before that time comes, alas, each little arm will be nearly twisted off with the process. At last the hardening mass is

poured into tins and set aside to be thoroughly cooled. The next day the sugar is ready for packing in stone jars, to be kept for family use. Some of it may be traded at the store for pins, needles, saleratus, and tea.

There was a broad shelf in every genuine pantry of those good old days. It was at one end of a capacious room, and on both sides it was flanked by other shelves. On one side were pans of milk; on the other were canisters of spices, coffee, tea; and there were jars of preserves and pickles. The lower shelves were sacred to pies and goodies; while under the broad shelf stood the great stone jars of maple sugar. Bless my soul! How I should like to eat one more dinner from that broad shelf! Maple sugar and bread in equal proportions—and gooseberry jelly with currant tarts and caraway cookies. Bless the Lord for memory! I can almost compass the dinner at this moment. Under the window outside came the chickens, saying as plainly as could be: "What, take our eggs and not give us a share? What, eating and not call us?" Then we spared them the crumbs—those that we found in the great wooden bread-bowl!

I hold it still that a maple sap-bush is the most genuinely native American spot in the land. In England the maple sap will not make sugar, and the Norway maples give milk. "In fact," said our father, "we have it all. What else do we need? Have we not the fruits and the animals and the salt

and the sugar?" "And our birds," said the little mother, "do they not sing sweeter than any others?" "To be sure," said our father, "what a home God has given us! He has furnished it well."

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THE HOUSE WREN

When you are sound asleep some April morning, a tiny brown bird, just returned from a long visit south, will probably alight on the perch in front of one of your boxes, peep in the doorhole, enter—although his pert little cocked-up tail has to be lowered to let him through—look about with approval, go out, spring to the roof and pour out of his wee throat a gushing torrent of music. The song seems to bubble up faster than he can sing. After the wren's happy discovery of a place to live, his song will go off in a series of musical explosions all day long, now from the roof, now from the clothes posts, the fence, the barn, or the woodpile. There never was a more tireless, spirited, brilliant singer. From the intensity of his feelings, he sometimes droops that expressive little tail of his, which is usually so erect and saucy.

With characteristic energy, he frequently begins to carry twigs into the house before he finds a mate. The day little Jenny Wren appears on the scene, how he does sing! Dashing off for more twigs, but stopping to sing to her every other minute, he helps furnish the cottage quickly, but, of course, he

overdoes—he carries in more twigs and hay and feathers than the little house can hold, then pulls half of them out again. Jenny gathers, too, for she is a bustling housewife and arranges matters with neatness and despatch. Neither vermin nor dust will she tolerate within her well-kept home. Everything she does to suit herself pleases her ardent little lover. He applauds her with song; he flies about after her with a nervous desire to protect; he seems beside himself with happiness. Let any one pass too near his best beloved, and he begins to chatter excitedly: *"Chit-chit-chit-chit,"* as much as to say, "Oh, do go away; go quickly! Can't you see how nervous and fidgety you make me?"

If you fancy that Jenny Wren, who is patiently sitting on the little pinkish, chocolate spotted eggs in the centre of her feather bed, is a demure, angelic creature, you have never seen her attack the sparrow, nearly twice her size, that dares put his impudent head inside her door. Oh! how she flies at him! How she chatters and scolds! What a plucky little shrew she is, after all! Her piercing, chattering, scolding notes are fairly hissed into his ears until he is thankful enough to escape.

If the bluebirds had her courage and hot, quick temper, they would never let the sparrows drive them away from their boxes. Unfortunately a hole large enough to admit a bluebird will easily admit those grasping monopolists; but Jenny Wren is safe, if she did but know it, in her house with its tiny

front door. It is amusing to see a sparrow try to work his shoulders through the small hole of an empty wren house, pushing and kicking madly, but all in vain.

What rent do the wrens pay for their little houses? No man is clever enough to estimate the vast numbers of insects on your place that they destroy. They eat nothing else, which is the chief reason why they are so lively and excitable. Unable to soar after flying insects because of their short, round wings, they keep, as a rule, rather close to the ground which their finely barred brown feathers so closely match. Whether hunting for grubs in the wood-pile, scrambling over the brush heap after spiders, searching among the trees to provide a dinner for their large families, or creeping, like little feathered mice, in queer nooks and crannies among the outbuildings on the farm, they are always busy in your interest which is also theirs. It certainly pays, in every sense, to encourage the wrens.

There's a little brown wren that has built in our tree,
And she's scarcely as big as a big bumble-bee;
She has hollowed a house in the heart of a limb,
And made the walls tidy and made the doors trim
With the down of the crow's foot, and tow, and with straw
The cosiest dwelling that you ever saw.

The little brown wren has the brightest of eyes
And a foot of very diminutive size.
Her tail is as big as the sail of a ship.
She's demure, though she walks with a hop and a skip;
And her voice—but a flute were more fit than a pen
To tell of the voice of the little brown wren.

THE HOUSE WREN

One morning Sir Sparrow came sauntering by
And cast on the wren's house an envious eye;
With a strut of bravado and toss of his head,
"I'll put in my claim here," the bold fellow said;
So straightway he mounted on impudent wing,
And entered the door without pausing to ring.

An instant—, and swiftly that feathery knight
All towsled and tumbled, in terror took flight,
While there by the door, in her favourite perch,
As neat as a lady just starting for church,
With this song on her lips, "He will not call again
Unless he is asked," sat the little brown wren.*

*"*The Little Brown Wren*" by Clinton Scollard.

THE TALE OF A DRAGON FLY

You have read tales of giants, fairies, and dragons. This story is about as strange a creature as any you have ever heard of. During its life it is called by three different names. That is because it looks and acts like three different animals, or insects. Early in its life it is like a fisherman catching fish with a fishing rod. Then it becomes like a steamboat going through the water. And last of all, it is like a beautiful fairy.

Once upon a time there lay at the bottom of a pond a round white ball. It was covered with a coat spun of the finest silk. Not a drop of water could get inside. Fishes and other swimming creatures brushed against it; but they could not get a bite of the dainty food, for the silken coat was tough and strong.

One day the little ball began to move. Then it cracked open, and out stepped the strangest looking creature you ever saw! It was gray and it had six legs. It was called a *larva*.

The larva was very hungry. There were many good meals waiting for him to eat. Swimming and crawling about in the water were little frogs, slugs, beetles, and grubs. He had only to sit and wait for a good breakfast or dinner to come along.

And this is how he got his food. As soon as he saw something that he fancied, pop! Out shot the larva's fishing-rod which he wore on his lower jaw. Then snap! The fishing-rod folded back, the sharp teeth snapped together, and the larva swallowed his food. Then he slowly laid his rod back on his head where it could not be seen and waited for another bite. The next moment, pop! Out shot the fishing-rod again and more food went down his throat.

Not long after this, the larva thought he would do something else. So he turned himself into a little steamboat! He went up and down the pond shooting out a stream of water with such force that it pushed him along. With the help of a little propeller on the end of his tail, he steamed anywhere he wished to go. Think of a living steamboat that breathes air with its gills just as a fish does.

After a long time the larva decided to change his name and shape. He turned into a pupa. Then he had a horny case. His body was ringed and there were spikes on it. His actions were now very different from what they were when he was a larva. Back and forth in the pond he darted swiftly. Everything he met ran away from him, even some creatures that were larger than he. The pupa was the terror of the waters.

Now comes the strangest part of the story. One day this lively little pupa became tired. His eyes grew brighter than they had been and he moved to the edge of the pond where the

water was shallow. All the while the little body inside the horny case was changing into something quite different. As soon as he reached the edge of the pond, he found a water plant growing there. Slowly and wearily he climbed up the stem. Up, up he went far above the water into the fresh air and sunshine. The hooks on his feet clung tightly to the stem. As soon as he was able he reached out; he caught hold of another stem. To and fro he swung between them. Then, pop! His horny case split open. And there, inside, was a lovely fairy-like thing with folded wings. For a while he pushed and tugged to free himself. Soon he was out of the case, but it was hanging still to his feet. He rested for a little while, and then——!

A wonderful creature with lace-like wings, beautiful colors on his body, and bright eyes growing more beautiful every moment, stood waiting to fly away.

This little fisherman, steamboat, and pupa had become a dragon fly. Giving a push with the last two of his six legs, he spread his four wings and flew away. He looked like a sparkling jewel in the bright sunshine.

THE CICADA'S STORY

ONCE upon a time a grasshopper introduced me to Mr. Periodical Cicada. He was a very pleasant fellow and not a bit stuck up; although the poets have written of him, and almost every one knows him by the name of seventeen year locust, though he really is not a locust at all. I was pleased to meet him, and asked him if he would mind telling me what he did all those seventeen years, and he replied:

"Not at all, now that they are over it is very pleasant to talk about them." Then he began his story. "Seventeen years ago this June, in an old orchard, my mother tucked away in the green twigs of a mossy apple tree hundreds of little cradles. I was sleeping in one and in the others were my brothers and sisters. While my mother was at work our father sat on a twig close by and sang the merriest lullaby that babies ever listened to.

"Several weeks later we little ones crept out of our cradles and dropped lightly to the ground beneath the tree; then each of us dug a little burrow and hid ourselves away in the warm, moist soil near sappy rootlets that gave us our food.

"We were very tiny at first, but little by little we grew,

always making our cells bigger to fit, so that we were as snug and cosy as babies could be, only it was very dark and lonely.

"The rootlets would tell us when it was spring, of how the pink and white blossoms were holding up perfumed cups to the blue sky; of the tree musical with the humming of the bees that came for honey; then of summer, when birds nested and sang among the green boughs; later of autumn, of apples mellow and ripe, globes of red and gold, that fell with a muffled thud in the long, green grass; and at last of the winter, and of the fleecy snow that clothed the old tree in soft white. They whispered of heat, of cold, of sunshine and rain, of freezing winds and balmy breezes; but we baby Cicadas neither understood nor cared, and there tucked away in our gloomy cells we lived seventeen long years.

"But one May day, in the sweetest of apple blossoming time, we little Cicadas made up our minds to go out into the world and seek our fortunes. Then every one of us began digging and carrying up to the surface tiny pellets of soft clay.

"My, but we did work hard, and by the time the big sun had hidden his round face in the west each of us had built a funny little chimney six inches high."

"Oh, how lovely!" I cried; "and please, Mr. Periodical Cicada, what were they for?"

But the Cicada only shook his head at me gravely, as much as to say that it was a Cicada family secret.

"When the chimneys were done," he went on, "we all

scrambled up and began hunting a safe place to rest. I soon found a fine twig where I held on for dear life. I wasn't very pretty, being dressed in a brown coat, and besides, I had become very muddy building my chimney. Now while I was hanging there hoping to dry off—click—and goodness me! if my little brown jacket hadn't split down my back from collar to waistband. I felt very bad, for even if it was a muddy, ugly brown coat, it was all I had, and I had no idea where to get another in the big, cold world I had just come into. But when I stepped out of my coat to see if I could mend it, my stockings and shoes came off with it and there I hung, if you will believe me, dressed in the prettiest cream-coloured suit you ever saw. I never was more surprised in my life.

"Just then, I happened to catch a glimpse of one of my sisters, and she also was in cream, and there was a brother; yes, there was the whole family, and every one of us in a lovely suit of cream-colour. But, oh, when we got a good look at each other we laughed till we almost fell from our perches, for each of us had pink eyes and heavy, fierce eyebrows, and queer humps on the sides of our necks. Such a ridiculous looking lot of youngsters you never saw. Beside us hung our old, muddy clothes, coat, shoes, stockings, and all. If you look in the orchard you can often find these old clothes long after the Cicadas have flown away."

"Oh, Mr. Cicada, how I should love to have seen you!" I

exclaimed. "I shall look for little brown coats as soon as I get home."

"This was only the beginning," went on Periodical. "The most wonderful things were to come; for slowly, slowly those humps on our necks began to swell, and after a time they opened out into two lovely, gauzy wings, veined with pearl colour. When the great round moon came gliding up over the orchard and shed down upon us her gentle, silvery light, there we hung like some strange, beautiful flowers. The apple blossoms thought we were flowers and whispered to us some of the prettiest honey and pollen secrets; they were so provoked when we flew away and they found out their mistake—but they need not fear for we will never tell; no, indeed, never!

"When morning came we found our beauty had been very fleeting, for our lovely cream-coloured suits had changed to greenish-brown, and our wings, though still transparent, were dull of colour. The males among us were drummers. Deep within my body, I carried two drums, each being covered by a plate that you can easily see on the outside. Now, I don't need drumsticks, for my drums are air instruments, and by twitching my muscles I can snap my drumheads faster and faster, making the gayest sort of roll-call. Listen to this: *Whirr-r-r-r-r!*"

BUZ AND HUM

THE time came when Buz and Hum, two young bees, were allowed to try their wings.

"Follow me," said a friendly older bee; "I can spare time to fly a little way; and when I stop, you stop, too."

"All right," cried Buz, trembling with excitement.

Hum said nothing, but her wings began to move, almost in spite of herself.

Away went the bee, as straight as a line from the mouth of the hive, and away flew Buz and Hum after her; but at first starting they found it a little difficult to keep quite straight, and Buz knocked against the board to begin with, and nearly stopped herself, as she had not learned how to rise.

The older bee did not go far. She lit on the branch of a peach tree which was growing against a wall near by. Buz came after her in a great hurry, but missed the branch and gave herself a bang against the wall. Hum saw this, and managed to stop herself in time; but she did not judge her distance very well either; and got on the peach tree in a scrambling sort of way.

"Very good," said their friend, as they all three stood to-

gether; "you will soon be able to take care of yourself now; but just let me see you back to the hive."

So off they flew again and lighted on the board in a very creditable manner.

"Now," said the bee, "I shall leave you; but before I go let me advise you, as a friend, not to quit the garden to-day; there are plenty of flowers, and plenty of opportunities for you to meet with 'Experience,' without flying over any of the four walls."

"Who is Experience?" asked Buz and Hum together.

"Oh! somebody to whom you are going to be introduced, who will teach you more in a day than you could learn from me in a week. Good-bye."

So saying, she disappeared into the hive.

"Isn't it too delightful?" exclaimed Buz to Hum. "Flying! why it's even more fun that I thought!"

"It is," said Hum; "but I should like to get some honey at once."

"Of course," replied Buz, "only I should like to fly a long way to get it."

"I want to fill a cell quickly," said Hum.

"Oh, yes, to be sure! What a delightful thing it will be to put one's proboscis down into every flower and see what's there! Do you know," added Buz, putting out her proboscis, "I feel as if I could suck honey tremendously; don't you?"

"Yes, yes," cried Hum. "I long to be at it; let's be off at once."

So away they went and lit on a bed of flowers. Hum spent the day between the hive and that bed, and was quite, quite happy; but Buz, though she, too, liked collecting the honey, wanted to have more excitement in getting it; and every now and then, as she passed to and from the hive, a lovely field of clover, not far off, sent forth such delicious smell, as the breeze swept over it, that she was strongly tempted to disregard the advice she had been given, and to hurry off to it.

At last she could stand it no longer; and, rising high into the air, she sailed over the wall and went out into the world beyond.

And so she reached the field of clover, and, flying quite low over the flowers, was astonished to see how many bees were busy among them—bumble-bees without end, and plenty of honey-bees, too; in fact, the air was filled with the pleasant murmur that they made.

"To be sure," said Buz to herself, "this is the place for me! Poor, dear old Hum! I hope she is enjoying herself as much as I am. I don't mean to be idle either, so here goes for some honey."

Buz was very diligent, indeed, and soon collected as much honey as she could carry. But by the time she had done this she found herself close to the farther end of the clover field; and while resting for a moment, before starting to carry her

load to the hive, she noticed a little pond in the corner. Feeling thirsty after her hard work, she flew off to take a few sips; but just as she reached the pond and was in the act of descending, a light gust of wind caught her and turned her half over, and before she could recover herself she was plunged far out into the water!

Poor Buz! She was a brave little bee, but this was a terrible accident; and after a few wild struggles she almost gave herself up. The water was so cold, and she felt herself so helpless in it; and then the accident had happened so suddenly, and taken her so utterly by surprise, that it is no wonder she lost courage. Only for a moment though; just as she was giving up in despair the hard and seemingly useless work of paddling and struggling with all her poor little legs at once, she saw that a bit of stick was floating near her, and with renewed energy she attempted to get to it. Alas! It was all she could do to keep her head above water; as for moving along through it, that seemed impossible, and she was tempted to give up once more. It was very hard though; there was the stick, not more than a foot away from her. If she could only reach it! At any rate, she was determined it should not be her fault if she was unsuccessful; so she battled away harder than ever, though her strength began to fail and she was becoming numbed with the cold. Just as she made this last effort another gust of wind swept over the pond, and Buz saw that the stick began to move through the water, and to come

nearer and nearer to her. The fact was that a small twig sticking up from it acted as a sail, though Buz did not know this. And now the stick was quite close, almost within reach; in another moment she would be on it. Ah! but a moment seems a long time when one is at the last gasp, as poor Buz was.

Would she be drowned after all? No! Just as she was sinking she touched the stick with one little claw, and held on as only drowning people can; and then she got another claw safely lodged, and was able to rest for a moment. Oh! the relief of *that*, after such a long ceaseless struggle!

But even then it was very hard to get up on the stick, very hard indeed. However, Buz managed it at last, and dragged herself quite out of the cold water.

By this time the breeze was blowing steadily over the pond, and the stick would soon reach the bank; but Buz felt very miserable and cold, and her wings clung tightly to her, and she looked dreadfully forlorn.

The pond, too, was overshadowed by trees so there were no sunbeams to warm her. "Ah," thought she, "if I can manage to drag myself up into the sunshine and rest and be well warmed, I shall soon be better."

Well, the bank was safely reached at last! but Buz, all through her life, never forgot what a business it was climbing up the side. The long grasses yielded to her weight, and bent almost straight down, as if on purpose to make it as up-hill

work for her as possible. And even when she reached the top it took her a weary while to get across the patch of dark shadow and out into the glad sunlight beyond; but she managed to arrive there at last, and crawling on the top of a stone which had been well warmed by the sun's rays, she rested for a long time.

At last she recovered sufficiently to make her way, by a succession of short flights, back to the hive. After the first of these flights she felt so dreadfully weak that she almost doubted being able to accomplish the journey, and began to despond.

"If I ever do get home," she said to herself, "I will tell Hum all about it, and how right she was to take advice."

"Now, whether it was the exercise that did her good, or that the sun's rays became hotter that afternoon, cannot be known, but this is certain, that Buz felt better after every flight. When she reached the end of the clover field, she sipped a little honey, cleaned herself with her feet, stretched her wings, and, with the sun glistening brightly on her, looked quite fine again. Her last flight brought her to the top of the kitchen-garden wall. After resting here, she opened her wings and flew gaily to the hive, which she entered just as if nothing had happened.

THE HOME BUILDERS: A BIRDOLOGUE *

(The time is May. The scene is any orchard. The characters are Lord and Lady Baltimore, the Orioles.)

Lord Baltimore. So here we are, my sweet, and glad
We came; for, while 'tis true we had
A charming winter holiday
In Southern climes, when gentle May
Has come, our cooler northern sky
I much prefer.

Lady Baltimore. And so do I!
The very heart within me quakes
To think about those dreadful snakes
Among the swamps! I can't forget
That mottled wretch with eyes of jet
Who swung his ugly head above
Our nest——

Lord B. There! calm yourself, my love;
He isn't here, and if he were
I'd teach him manners!——Well, bestir!

From *The Mirthful Lyre.* Copyright, 1918. Harper and Brothers.

'Tis May, 'tis May! my dearest one;
The sun is bright, our journey's done;
The grass is green; the orchard trees,
In bloom, are all alive with bees;
The gipsy wind shall help us plan
A frolic flight——

Lady B. How like a man!
To think of play and idle flight
Before we'd even found a site
To build our proper, hanging nest!

Lord B. Ah, well, I thought you needed rest;
But, since you're anxious, let's prepare:
Now, that young maple over there——

Lady B. O, no, indeed!
It's much too near
The house.

Lord B. That leafy birch——
Lady B. My dear,
It's far too low.
Lord B. The sycamore?
Lady B. Too bare.
Lord B. The oak?
Lady B. I've said before

That oaks have branches far too rough:
Besides they never sway enough
To rock the babies.

Lord B. How about
That spreading elm? It's just without
The orchard wall; that dizzy height
No cat may climb; those branches light
No boy dare trust. Besides, you see,
My office in the cherry tree
Is close at hand.

Lady B. You don't suppose
Those thievish jays or hungry crows——

Lord B. I'd like to see them go so far
As just to peep!

Lady B. How brave you are!

Lord B. Well, then, it's settled?

Lady B. Yes, I trust
Your judgment, dear,

Lord B. My love, we must
Be sure to find the very best
Of grass and moss to build our nest,

With threads from Dobbin's tail and mane
To weave it close against the rain;
With thread as soft as spiders spin,
And wool to line it warm within;
With raveled bits of silken clues,
With tangled yarn of many hues;
And, last, to make it doubly fair,
Some strands of Edith's golden hair.

A LYRIC OF JOY

Over the shoulders and slopes of the dune,
I saw the white daisies go down to the sea;
A host in the sunshine, a snowdrift in June,
The people God sends us to set our hearts free.

The bob-o-links rallied them up from the dell,
The orioles whistled them out of the wood;
And all of their singing was, "Earth, it is well,"
And all of their dancing was, "Life, thou art good."

SPINNERS OF SILK

Looking at the ugly little grubs lying on their bed of leaves, it was almost impossible to believe that without their help we should never have known the most beautiful stuff in the world. Often men have tried to find out the secret of its making, but all their efforts have failed to produce anything so soft and lustrous, so delicate and yet so strong, as the silken thread of which every little silkworm spins his cradle.

These threads, so fine that they can be woven into tissue light enough to cloak a fairy, are yet so strong that silken cloth stout enough for the sails of a royal barge is made of them.

From the beginning of history men have wondered at the work of the silkworm, and have robbed him of his silken threads and sold them for their weight in gold to the weavers of robes for the kings and princes of the earth.

The little spinners have been taken captive, and fed and tended with the greatest care, that men might afterward possess the fruit of their labours—the little silken cocoons hanging on the mulberry leaves.

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SPINNERS OF SILK

More than four thousand years ago a wise Empress of China was not too proud to set her people the example of cherishing the silkworm by herself gathering from the mulberry-trees in her palace garden handfuls of the fresh leaves which are their daily food. And to all her subjects the command was issued that they should plant this tree by the side of their rice-fields, so that the race of silk-spinners might flourish in their land.

So jealous were the rulers of China lest any other nation should have a share in the treasure they had discovered, that they forbade any person to carry a single one of the priceless eggs of the silkworm out of the country.

But in time stolen eggs traveled across Asia and into Southern Europe, reaching one country after another, and everywhere mulberry-trees were planted, and men willingly gave their strength and skill to the care of the precious worm.

But what of the little workers whose labours have been treated with so much respect and attention in all ages? The race has certainly flourished through the centuries of tender captivity, but they have lost their independence and liberty and the power of providing for themselves, and helplessly look to their protectors to shelter them from harm and supply all their needs.

One day some one took a peep into the house of a peasant rearer of silkworms, and laid upon a table in a warm room he saw rows of little white eggs.

Out of some of these were showing the black heads of hairy caterpillars busily gnawing their way through the shells that walled them in. Those who were out of their prisons at once made their way on to some mulberry boughs placed just over them, and were soon carried on the boughs to another table where a good meal of finely chopped leaves awaited them.

Each hairy little black body was supported on eight pairs of legs; the first three pairs were horny and carried hooks, and the other ten legs were soft and thick, and had bristles round the feet. It was by means of these hooks and bristles that they were moving so nimbly over the leaves, gripping them with their upper lips, and cutting them up with their strong jaws. Their mouths were so big and took up so much room that it seemed as though the nose had been crowded out, for they had instead nine little breathing holes down each side of their body.

At first the caterpillars ate as though they would never be satisfied. Fresh leaves had to be placed before them half a dozen times a day, and they devoured the last meal as greedily as the first.

But after a few days their appetite suddenly failed, and, refusing the green leaves that had lately proved so tempting, they threw from the little tubes under their mouths a few silken threads on to the leaves around them, and slipping their bodies under these cords they went into a deep sleep.

While they slept under their hairy brown skins, which, in

consequence of their heavy feeding, had been growing uncomfortably small for the last day or two, a new skin was growing, and when the silkworms woke and began to twist and turn, *crack* went their tight jackets, splitting all down their heads and backs, and soon wriggling out of them, they appeared in smooth grey coats, bigger and fatter than before.

At first, exhausted with the struggle to get out of their old skins, they could not rouse themselves even to eat, but after a time they gathered strength to climb on to the bed of freshly chopped leaves put for them, and were soon eating away, rather languidly to begin with, but before long with their former appetite and vigour, for they needed plenty of food to support their growing bodies. Besides they had to lay up a reserve of strength for their second sleep and fast, which would be coming upon them in a few days.

On awaking from the second sleep, when the silkworms thrust their way out of their faded, withered skins, they were seen to be clothed in fresh new shiny raiment of pale yellow. As before, after the change they seemed for a time barely alive, and would touch nothing, but it was not long before they were munching away at their food as heartily as ever.

Four times these lucky little creatures were given a change for their outgrown skins, and each time the new coat was bigger and of a more delicate colour, till at last, instead of being tiny, hairy, black grubs, they were now fat, white, smooth-skinned, and as long as one's little finger; though when

they first came out of the shell it would have taken two or three of them put head to tail to measure as much as the first joint.

Each time the caterpillars found themselves in new loose coats, they ate more and more hungrily, till after the fourth change they devoured the leaves so fast, and so noisily, and so greedily, that one would have burst their jackets before it was time for them to have their new ones. In fact the food they ate weighed several times as much as their own bodies.

But this fierce hunger did not last long. Before the end of the day the silkworms began to turn yellow, and their bodies were so transparent that one could almost see through them.

Now that they had finished their two months of caterpillar-hood they became suddenly very restless, and seemed anxious to see what kind of world it was that lay beyond the nursery of mulberry leaves where they had been content to pass their weeks of growth.

Something within them urged them to climb; perhaps it was a feeling handed down to them from the wild ancestors who had lived their lives among the mulberry-trees. But walls instead of mulberry plantations surrounded them, and their attendants seeing their unrest placed before them little sprigs of heather, and into these the silkworms soon climbed.

Now they began to make ready a resting-place where they might sleep while yet stranger changes took place in their wonderful little bodies than any that had yet happened.

From the silk-making tubes inside them they began to pour out through a little hole below their mouths a glassy silken thread, coated with waterproof gum, and this they cast here and there over the little twigs. Once firmly tied to the heather, they set to work to unwind more of the silk they had been manufacturing the last few days when they had been feeding so busily on the mulberry leaves.

Bending their bodies almost double, they poured out a thousand yards of the silken thread, moving their heads round and round so that the thread should be arranged round their bodies in a web.

For four whole days they spun without ceasing, till at last each was shut up within his silky walls, and there, with no eye to see, he disencumbered himself of his last caterpillar skin, leaving it in a wrinkled, withered heap.

If one could have seen through the walls of his prison-house at the moment when he rid himself of his cast-off garment, one would have supposed him to be an utterly different creature from the soft-bodied caterpillar that has been described. Wrapped in a transparent veiling of white he lay, different in colour, shape, and even in the number of limbs that he possessed. The ten soft, bristly legs had disappeared, and the six horny, hooked legs were folded over his body, and closely packed away, too, under the veiling were four tiny wings, two feelers, and a long trunk.

But one must have looked just at the right moment, for

even as one gazed the thin white veil grew hard and opaque and russet-brown in colour, and hidden beneath it, in its white silk cell, lay a mysterious creature that neither moved nor ate, and yet lived and breathed.

After about two weeks there was a stirring of the veiled recluse in its cell, and, with its movements, the cloak, grown thin and brittle, began to tear, and soon its owner, freed from its folds, was working his way through the silken wrappings that imprisoned him.

But the threads that formed them had been spun and gummed so closely together that all his efforts would have been of no avail if Nature had not taken care, when he built his little cell, to give him a key whereby he might open the door. This key was a magic liquid which he carried in a little bag on his head, and he knew that he need only wet the walls a little with it and the threads would part and make a way for him to come out.

What had once been in turn a crawling white caterpillar and a motionless brown chrysalis was now a six-legged grey moth with wings only just beginning to unfold from the creases in which they had been so closely packed away in the chrysalis case. He bore, besides, on his head a feeding trunk and two delicate feelers, and instead of the six eyes he had possessed as a caterpillar he had now but two.

Of the wings he was now stretching he would make but little use, for in the long captivity in which his race had had

their wants supplied, they had nearly lost their power of flight. But what did that matter when for the remainder of his short life a gentle flutter would bring him within reach of all he needed—his own companions, and the sweet juices on which he loved to feed?

But it must not be supposed that all the silkworms were allowed to make their way out of their silken cells. That would have meant the breaking of the precious thread of which the walls were spun, and it was for this thread that the little spinners had been so tenderly nursed and fed for many months.

No! The cocoons were to be the reward of all those unceasing attentions, and hardly had the workers wound the last length of their thread when careful hands broke the silken cords fastening the cocoons to the sprigs of heather, and setting aside those in which they wished to preserve the chrysalis, they put the others into a bath of steam, so that the sleeping prisoners within should not rouse again and break their prison walls.

Then the silken webs, carefully unwound by skilful fingers, were twisted together, ready for the weaving of the tissue which all the art of man is unable to produce without the silkworm's labour.

HOW THE SPIDER MAKES ITS WEB

Nature has provided spiders with an organ filled always with liquid which, on being exposed to the air, hardens, and can be drawn out into the slender threads we know as cobwebs. The silk-worm encases its body with a mile or more of gleaming silk, but there its usefulness is ended as far as the silk-worm is concerned. But spiders have found a hundred uses for their cordage, some of which are startlingly similar to human inventions.

Those spiders which burrow in the earth hang their tunnels with silken tapestries impervious to wet, which, at the same time, act as lining to the tube. Then the entrance may be a trap-door of soil and silk, hinged with strong silken threads; or, by the turret spiders, which are found in our fields, there is reared a tiny tower of leaves or twigs bound together with silk. Who of us has not teased the inmate by pushing a bent straw into his stronghold and awaiting his furious onslaught upon the innocent stalk!

A list of all the uses of cobwebs would take more space than we can spare; but of these the most familiar is the snare set for unwary flies,—the wonderfully ingenious webs which

sparkle with dew among the grasses or stretch from bush to bush. The framework is of strong webbing and upon this is closely woven the sticky spiral which is so elastic, so ethereal, and yet strong enough to entangle a good-sized insect. How knowing seems the little worker, as when, the web and his dew of concealment being completed, he spins a strong cable from the center of the web to the entrance of his watch-tower. Then, when a trembling of his aerial spans warn him of a capture, how eagerly he seizes his master cable and jerks away in it, thus vibrating the whole structure and making more certain the confusion of his victim.

What is more interesting than to see a great yellow garden-spider, hanging head down-wards in the center of his web, when we approach too closely, instead of deserting his snare, set it vibrating back and forth so rapidly that he becomes a mere blur; a more certain method of escaping the onslaught of a bird than if he ran to the shelter of a leaf.

Those spiders which leap upon their prey instead of setting snares for it have still a use for their thready life, throwing out a cable as they leap, to break their fall if they miss their foothold. What a strange use of the cobweb is that of the little flying spiders! Up they run to the top of a post, elevate their abdomens and run out several threads which lengthen and lengthen until the breeze catches them and away go the wingless aeronauts for yards or for miles as fortune

and wind and weather may dictate! We wonder if they can cut loose or pull in their balloon cables at will.

Many species of spiders spin a case for holding their eggs, and some carry this about with them until the young are hatched.

A most fascinating tale would unfold could we discover all the uses of cobweb when the spiders themselves are through with it. Certain it is that our ruby-throated humming bird robs many webs to fasten together the plant down, wood pulp, and lichens which compose her dainty nest.

Search the pond and you will find another member of the spider family swimming about at ease beneath the surface, thoroughly aquatic in habits, but breathing a bubble of air which he carries about with him. When his supply is low he swims to a submarine castle of silk, so air-tight that he can keep it filled with a large bubble of air, upon which he draws from time to time.

And so we might go on enumerating almost endless uses for the web which is Nature's gifts to these little waifs, who ages ago left the sea and have won a place for themselves in the sunshine among the butterflies and flowers.

From Beebe's "*The Log of the Sun.*" Used by permission of Henry Holt Company.

MOTHER SPIDER

It was a beautiful day in midsummer. The meadow was alive with busy little people astir in the bright sunlight. A long line of ants came crawling down the path carrying provisions to their home under the elm tree; and an old toad came hopping down through the grass, blinking in the warm sun. Just a little higher up the bees were droning drowsily as they flew from flower to flower; and above them all, seeming almost in the blue sky, a robin was calling to his mate.

Pretty soon Mrs. Spider came down the path. She seemed to be in a great hurry. She looked neither to the right nor to the left, but kept straight ahead, holding tightly to a little white bag which she carried in her mouth. She was just rushing past Mr. Toad when a big black beetle came humping by, stumbled against Mrs. Spider, and knocked the bag out of her mouth.

In an instant Mrs. Spider pounced down upon him; and, though he was so much bigger than she, he tumbled over on his back. While he was trying to kick himself right side up once more, Mrs. Spider made a quick little dash, took up her bag, and scuttled off through the grass.

"Well, I never," said Grasshopper Green, who was playing see-saw on a blade of grass.

"No, nor I," grumbled Mr. Beetle, as he wriggled back to his feet. "I didn't want her bag. She needn't have made such a fuss."

"She must have had something very fine in that bag," said Grasshopper Green, "for she was so frightened when she dropped it. I wonder what it was"—and he balanced himself on his grass blade until a stray breeze blew him off, and then he straightway forgot about Mrs. Spider altogether.

Two weeks after this Grasshopper Green started out for a little exercise after breakfast. Just as he reached the edge of the brook he saw Mrs. Spider coming toward him. She was moving quite slowly, and no longer carried the little white bag. As she came nearer, he could see that she had something on her back.

"Good morning, neighbor," called Grasshopper Green. "May I help you carry your things?"

"Thank you," she said, "but they wouldn't stay with you, even if they could stay on when you give such great jumps."

"They!" cried Grasshopper Green. And then, as he came nearer, he saw that the things on Mrs. Spider's back were wee little baby spiders.

"Aren't they pretty children?" she asked proudly. "I was so afraid that something would happen to my eggs that

I never let go of the bag once, except when that stupid Mr. Beetle knocked it out of my mouth."

"Oh, ho," said Grasshopper Green, "so that was what frightened you so! Your bag was full of eggs! And, now, you are going to carry all these children on your back? Doesn't it tire you dreadfully?"

"I don't mind that a bit," said Mrs. Spider, "if only the children are well and safe. In a little while, you know, they will be able to run about by themselves, and then we shall be so happy here in the meadow grass. Oh, it's well worth the trouble, neighbor Grasshopper."

"Yes," said Grasshopper Green, "I have a dozen wee boys of my own at home; and that reminds me that it is time to go home to breakfast! Good-bye, neighbour. I hope the children will soon be running about with you. You certainly are taking good care of them. Good-bye."

Then home he went; and the proud, happy mother Spider kept on her way to hunt for a breakfast for the babies she loved so well.

THE FIRST SPIDER

Once upon a time there lived a beautiful maiden named Arachne, who was very proud of her marvellous skill in weaving. The people who watched her declared she must have learned her art from Minerva. But the proud maiden denied this saying that she had taught herself and furthermore that she could equal the goddess in skill.

One day when Arachne was seated at her loom there appeared before her an old woman leaning on a staff. Raising her withered hand in warning, she begged the maiden to beware of boastfulness and pride; and declared that the mortal who tried to match skill with the goddess, Minerva, was in danger of punishment.

But Arachne heeded not the warning. She tossed her head in scorn and said, "Begone! I care not for your advice. If Minerva's skill is greater than mine, let her prove it by fair trial."

Then a marvellous thing happened. The bent form of the old woman changed to the shining form of Minerva. In a commanding voice the goddess now ordered that two looms be set up for a contest in weaving. This was done and a famous

contest began. With rare grace and skill the goddess and the maiden threw their swift shuttles. And silently the skilled weavers worked until each web was finished. Then Arachne glanced at her rival's marvellous web. The maiden had never dreamed of anything so beautiful. Her heart sank for instantly she realized how foolish she had been to enter into a contest with one of the immortals.

Poor Arachne could not bear this great blow to her pride. In her grief she hung her head and wept. Then Minerva quickly sprinkled the maiden's body with magic juices and said, "Boastful Arachne, thou art now changed into a spider. Thou and thy descendants shall spin throughout all the ages to come." And there hanging to a slender thread was the first spider.

THE TALE OF TWO TAILS

"Taddypole and Pollywog
Lived together in a bog;
Here you see the very pool
Where they went to summer school.

"By and by—'tis true, though strange,
O'er them came a wondrous change;
Here you see them on a log,
Each a most decided Frog."

MOTHER'S PORTFOLIO.

THE little pond behind the machine-shop was full of tadpoles—wee fellows—all head and tail. Jolliest of these were Taddypole and Pollywog, two little cousins, who spent their time in countless swimming matches or games of hide-and-seek among the stones which bordered the pond.

Barefooted boys and girls peeped over the edge of the water to watch the tadpoles darting hither and thither; then, with merry shouts, returned to their own play.

Taddy's and Pollie's round eyes watched them curiously. Sometimes when the land-babies waded in the shallow water these tiny water-babies played fearlessly around their feet, nibbling their toes or playing leapfrog over them.

So they passed merry days; and when the twilight came, Taddy and Pollie were ready to listen to the band concert. This, unfortunately, was given on land, so the little tadpoles could not be present, but from the water they could catch glimpses of Father Frog booming away on his big bass drum, and hear the sweet chirping chorus of the tiny frog violinists in the marsh near by.

"Oh, Pollie," cried Tadpole, "if we could only go to the concert! Why, I'd be willing to give up hide-and-seek for a week just to get a little nearer to the music."

"I know," said Pollywog gloomily. "I want to go myself, the very worst kind of way. There's no use wishing, though, for we have no clothes that would be suitable. Only green silk dress suits with polka dots are worn this year. Besides, we can't stand it out of the water. It's too warm or something, I don't know just what; but I always feel half smothered if I try."

"Besides," reflected Taddy, "we haven't been invited. Only musicians are asked, and we can't sing, you know."

Splash! Ker-Chunk! Father Frog hopped into the water, then out again on a broad stone, where he began thundering a bass solo:

"Come along, come along,
Come along!"

"Oh, how I wish we could!" cried the little tadpoles, feeling that this was a personal invitation. They swam as close

as possible to the stone, and gazed admiringly at the great singer.

"Could what?" grumbled Father Frog.

"Wish we could go to the concert."

"Ker-chug!" answered Father Frog.

It sounded very much like a hoarse chuckle. "Why don't you go?"

"No invitation."

"No dress suit."

"Can't breath out of the water."

The tadpoles' voices were very mournful as they gave their reasons.

"I invite you," said Father Frog, "to the July concert three weeks from to-day. Your dress suits will be ready; and as far as breathing is concerned, it's all practice. Would you believe it?" he said in hoarse whisper. "I couldn't stay out of the water very well myself at one time, but I practiced breathing every day, until now it is the easiest thing in the world. But speaking of practice making perfect reminds me I must rehearse my song for the concert.

"Come along, come along,
Come along!"

"Let's go down in the sand," whispered Pollie. "I can always think better down there; and, really, this is all so

surprising I must think it over. Oh, Taddy, do you think we could truly go to the concert?"

Taddy swished his tail and dived down without answering, feeling this to be too much of a problem for a tadpole to decide.

"It's very strange," said Taddy a few days later; "it certainly seems as if we were getting legs—what use have tadpoles for them? We need only our strong tails for swimming."

"Taddy," cried Pollie, "there's something still stranger. Our tails are shrinking. If they don't stop they will disappear, and then what could we do?"

"Grr-nm, grr-nm!" sounded Father Frog's hoarse voice. "Getting ready for the concert, I see! Well, when you lose those ridiculous tails you will look much better."

"Lose them!" exclaimed the tadpoles; "and what do you think we could do without them?" But Father Frog had disappeared, leaving only the echo of his "Come along."

"I feel as if something strange were about to happen," said Pollie. "I'm tired of tag and hide-and-seek; let's think of some new game."

"We might practice breathing, as Father Frog advised," suggested Taddy; "let's go to the top of the water and see who can keep his head out the longer."

This new game interested the tadpoles very much, and in a week's time they began really to enjoy the air.

"I can stay out a long while now," announced Taddy

triumphantly, "and since my front legs appeared I can jump quite high."

"Our tails are quite gone," said Pollie, "and I don't know but that it is an improvement. I think I like legs better than tails, and hopping is much more fun than swimming. Some day I mean to hop up on that wet stone where Father Frog sits so often. Wouldn't he be surprised to see me there?"

"What fun!" exclaimed Taddy. "Try it now. There, you did it! Oh, Pollie, how fine you look! Do you like it up there? I'm coming, too, Pollie. Hurrah!"

"Ho, ho!" chuckled Father Frog from the land. "Are you ready for the concert, little frogs?"

Taddy and Pollie looked at each other in astonishment.

"Are we frogs?" they cried.

"Why, yes."

"Oh, Taddy, and you have your green suit!"

"So have you, Pollie."

"Why, I shouldn't be surprised at anything now, not even if we could sing. Let's try," and both little frogs lifted up their voices and sang.

"Che-weep, che-weep, che-weep."

They looked so droll, and sang with such a funny chirp, that Father Frog fell off the bank splash into the water with laughter.

Taddy and Pollie didn't mind this in the least, for they

were sure that Che-weep was the most beautiful song in the world.

And this is the way Taddypole and Pollywog lost their tails, and gained their voices in time for the July concert.

THE FAIRY LAMPS *

THERE was once a little bare-legged, brown-limbed boy who spent all his time in the woods. He loved the woods and all that was in them. He used to look, not *at* the flowers but deep down *into* them, and not *at* the singing bird, but into its eyes, to its little heart; and so he got an insight better than most others, and he quite gave up collecting birds' eggs.

But the woods were full of mysteries. He used to hear little bursts of song, and when he came to the place he could find no bird there. Noises and movements would just escape him. In the woods he saw strange tracks, and one day, at length, he saw a wonderful bird making these very tracks. He had never seen the bird before, and would have thought it a great rarity had he not seen its tracks everywhere. So he learned that the woods were full of beautiful creatures that were skillful and quick to avoid him.

One day as he passed by a spot for the hundredth time, he found a bird's nest. It must have been there for long, and yet he had not seen it; and so he learned how blind he was, and he exclaimed, "Oh, if only I could see, then I might

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understand these things! If only I knew. If I could see but for once how many there are and how near! If only every bird would wear over its nest this evening a little lamp to show me!"

The sun was down now; but all at once there was a soft light on the path, and in the middle of it the brown boy saw a Little Brown Lady in a long robe, and in her hand a rod.

She smiled pleasantly and said: "Little Boy, I am the Fairy of the Woods. I have been watching you for long. I like you. You seem to be different from other boys. *Your request shall be granted.*"

Then she faded away. But at once the whole landscape twinkled over with wonderful little lamps: long lamps, short lamps, red, blue, and green, high and low, doubles, singles, and groups; wherever he looked were lamps, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, here and everywhere, until the forest shone like the starry sky.

He ran to the nearest and there, surely, was a bird's nest. He ran to the next; yes, another nest. And here and there was a different kind of lamp for another kind of nest. A beautiful purple blaze in a low tangle caught his eye. He ran there, and found a nest he had never seen before. It was full of purple eggs, and there was the rare bird he had seen but once. It was chanting the weird song he had often heard, but never traced.

But the eggs were marvelous things. His old egg-collect-

ing instinct broke out. He reached forth to clutch the wonderful prize, and—in an instant all the lights went out. There was nothing but the black woods about him.

Then on the pathway shone again the soft light. It grew brighter, till in the middle of it he saw the Little Brown Lady, the Fairy of the Woods. But she was not smiling now. Her face was stern and sad as she said: "I fear I set you overhigh. I thought you better than the rest. Keep this in mind: 'Who reverence not the lamp of life, can never see its light.' Then she faded from his view.

I've plucked the berry from the bush,
The brown nut from the tree,
But heart of happy little bird n'er broken was by me,
I passed them by, and blessed them all;
I felt that it was good
To leave unmoved the creatures small
Whose home was in the wood.

WILLIAM MOTHERWELL.

BIRD SOLDIERS

"TINKLE, tinkle," went the tiny bell. It was fastened to a board on the side of a pigeon house in Robert and Elizabeth's back yard. The birds who lived in the pretty house were Mr. and Mrs. Pigeon and their six children.

The little mother and father of this family had been given to Robert and Elizabeth by their grandfather. "They are homing pigeons of the finest sort," he told them. "No matter where you take them, they will always fly back to their home."

Robert and Elizabeth were delighted to hear the tinkle, tinkle of the bell on the pigeon house. That morning their father had taken the parent pigeons away in a basket, and had set them free in different places with tiny messages fastened to their legs. All day long Robert and his sister had watched for their return. So when the tiny bell on the door of the pigeon house rang, the children ran quickly out into the yard.

There all aflutter with excitement were the two little bird travelers. They seemed to be telling their six children where they had been and what they had seen. When Robert and Elizabeth came near, the two pigeons flew down to them. One perched on Robert's shoulder and the other on Elizabeth's.

"They are darlings," exclaimed the little girl.

The children stood for a while playing with their pets. Suddenly Robert became very thoughtful. In a few moments he said, "Elizabeth, let's send our pigeons to be soldiers."

"Oh, Robert," cried Elizabeth; "send our darlings away! How can we?"

"Captain Reese said that our country needs many pigeons to carry messages for the army."

"But the mother and father pigeons would fly straight back to their home here. I believe they would come clear across the ocean."

"Yes, the mother and father would come back, but the children wouldn't. They would make fine flyers and help to win the war. Wouldn't we be proud of them?"

"They do look fine in their suits of soft blue feathers trimmed with white," said Elizabeth. "We'll send them to be bird soldiers, Robert."

Not far from the children's home was Captain Reese's camp. The children had often visited this place with their father and they knew Captain Reese well.

The six young pigeons were placed in a large basket with plenty of food.

"They must have peas," said Elizabeth.

"And plenty of corn and clear water," added Robert.

When the feeding was finished, the children carried the basket between them to the camp. There they gave their pets

to the officer in charge. Soon the six little pigeons were six bird soldiers ready to do service for their country.

When the children reached home, they felt very sad. Their father could not understand why they were so quiet. But their mother knew. After Robert and Elizabeth had gone to bed, she took their father out into the back yard and showed him the pigeon house.

Over the top of the house was a sign which Robert had printed and placed there. It said, "Liberty Loft." And over one window Elizabeth had hung a little service flag. On it were six blue stars.

SELECTED.

THE PRETENDING WOODCHUCK

Among the wild animals I have not known was a family of woodchucks who lived in a hollow log on the edge of a farm in New York State. Not that they cared much whether it was New York State or some other state. I mentioned it only that the details of this story may be verified by anyone who is inclined to doubt them. It was New York State.

Now there was a thing that distinguished this family to start with, from all other families of the neighborhood—they lived in a hollow log. All their relatives and friends lived in the ground. I don't know how this family started to live in the rotten log. But I do happen to know that, though there were a great many warm discussions about the relative merits of a house in a log, and a house in the ground, and though many ground houses in the best locations and with all modern improvements were offered to this family, they stuck to the house in the log.

The house certainly did have one advantage; it had two doors. And not only that, the log was part of an old fence, and the fence ran between the garden and the cornfield. So

in the summer when the garden stuff was fine, all you had to do was to walk down the hallway of the log, until you came to the left-hand door, and there you were right in the garden. But when fall came and the garden was dried up, but the corn was stacked in shocks or husked and put into the crib, all you had to do was to go down the hallway, to the door that turned to the right, and there you were in the cornfield. Quite aside from these advantages, who would live in a house with one door in it when he could just as well have one with two?

The log-house family consisted of father, mother, and four children. The youngest of these—the favourite of the family, was named Monax. His mother had heard that the scientific name for woodchuck was Arctomys Monax, and being of a scientific turn of mind, she was much taken with this name. But no woodchuck in her neighborhood had two names. So she took the last of the two and called her son Monax.

Monax had never been out in the world. He had been down to the two doors, and had looked out, but that was all. But he had been well instructed at home. He knew about men, and how they would sometimes shoot at woodchucks; and about dogs, and about the corn-crib; and for a long time he had known all about garden vegetables and corn. He was certainly a promising boy, even his father and mother acknowledged it, but he had one weak point—he could not learn which was his right hand and which was his left.

In the fall Monax' father was laid up with rheumatism.

He was a terrible old fellow to groan and carry on when he was sick, and his wife had to stand by him every minute. The house had to be prepared for winter, and the other children were at work on this. Saturday came and someone had to go to market. Who was there to go except Monax? So it was decided that Monax should go.

Mrs. Woodchuck gave him his instructions. She always gave everybody instructions. Mr. Woodchuck was, like many of us, quite an important man, away from home. "You go out at the right-hand door," said Mrs. Woodchuck to Monax; "mind me, at the right-hand door. You go through the corn-field 'till you come to the big rock in the middle of it. Then you turn to the right again." She paused a moment, and a look of hesitancy or misgiving came into her face. "Do you really know," she said solemnly, "do you really know your right hand from your left?" "Yes," said Monax. "Hold up your right one," said his mother. Monax' mind was in a whirl. He tried to imagine himself with his back to the cornfield door, where he stood when he had his last lesson on the subject. If he could only get that clearly in his mind, he could remember which hand he held up then. But he was too excited to think. So he held up one hand; he hadn't the slightest idea which it was. "Certainly," said his mother, "certainly. Your father said it was not safe to let you go, because you did not know your right hand from your left. But he under-rates you. He under-rates all the children." She

spoke almost petulantly. Then her mind seemed to be relieved, and she proceeded with her instructions. "Through the corn-field," she said, " 'till you come to the big rock; then you go to the right 'till you come to the edge of the field. You will see a couple of men in the cornfield. But do not be afraid of them; they are only scarecrows. Even if one of them has a gun, it is only a wooden one, and they can't hurt you. Go right ahead. At the edge of the corn-field, by the maple tree, you turn to the right again—always to the right. Then you will see the barn. Go in and look around there. Keep away from the horses and don't mind the odour. If you find a basket of corn on the barn floor, help yourself and come home. If you don't you will have to go a little farther. Just to the right of the barn a few yards—always to the right—is the corn-crib. That is where your father and I get most of the supplies for the family. You climb up into the old wagon-box that stands on the scaffolding, and jump from that into the crib. Getting out is much easier and after that all you have to do is to come home. You needn't hurry especially. I sha'n't be worried about you, because there are no dogs there—the dogs live away over on the other side of the fence beyond the garage—and I know the scarecrows will not hurt you."

So Monax started out. Down the hall he went, pondering his instructions. If Mrs. Woodchuck had not gone back to tie another piece of red flannel around Mr. Woodchuck's rheu-

matic knee, she might have observed that Monax moved slowly, as if in deep thought. But she observed nothing, and so said nothing.

Monax was in deep thought. He was trying to decide which was his right hand and which was his left. If he could only be sure of either one of them he could guess at the other one. He had to know before he got to the first of the two doors. Why were anybody's two hands so much alike? How could anyone be sure which was which? He stopped and held up one, then the other; they looked just alike. He struck one of them against the wall; then the other, they felt just alike. He couldn't stop long about it; if his mother caught him at it, she would probably suspect what was the matter with him, and his little journey into the world would be stopped before it began.

He came to the first door, and a sudden inspiration came to him. He never knew how it was, but he felt perfectly confident which was his right hand. It seemed perfectly simple, somehow. It was this one. So he turned out into the garden.

He didn't see any corn-shocks. But he was not surprised at that. His mother had said maybe they would have been hauled away by this time. He looked ahead. Yes, there was the big stone. It did look a good deal like a cement horse-block. "But then," he said to himself, "they make stone these days so that you can hardly tell it from cement." He looked for the two scarecrows. If they were there he would know

he was right. And there they were. They were awfully good imitations of men. One of them was walking about just a little. As he went by them, he noticed that neither of them had a gun, but he heard one of them say to the other, "Ever eat 'em?" "The young uns," said the other, "are pretty good; old ones too tough." Monax was much interested, but he was not frightened. On a page of the "Scientific American," which his mother brought home a few weeks before, he had read about the talking pictures that Mr. Edison had invented. He hadn't read of the talking scarecrows, but he had no doubt there were such. "You never can tell what these men will invent next," he said as he moved leisurely by.

At the big stone he turned—this way—he said to himself. "It is surprising how sure I am about my right hand now." He came to the edge of the field. There, just as his mother had said, was the barn. It looked more like a garage than a barn. But styles change. Anyway, there it was to the right, just as his mother had told him. "If you are sure of your direction everything else takes care of itself," he said. "The location is right."

He went into the barn. He noticed the odour; something like gasoline. He looked for the horses; none there. He glanced about for the basket of corn. All he saw, instead, was a bunch of waste lying on top of a big red tank. Where the horses ought to have been was an automobile. "Probably they have changed it over from a barn to a garage since mother

was here," he said; "if you are going to keep up with the times these days you can't stay in the house; you've got to get out where things are doing." It was no use to look for corn there. He had had no instruction to bring home gasoline. His mother used ammonia instead. So he took his time to look around the barn, and then he moved leisurely out. Just a few yards to the right again, as his mother had said, was the corn-crib. He had never seen one before, and this one looked small to him. It looked more like a dog-house to him. But the location was right again—"always to the right," his mother said.

The old wagon box wasn't there. But at the back end of the corn-crib there was a board tacked up from the crib to the tree. That was probably one end of the scaffold that had held the wagon box. Of course they wouldn't leave the wagon box there all the fall. Probably they were using it to haul corn, at that very moment, to that very crib.

Meantime Mrs. Woodchuck was growing very worried at home—for Monax had taken more time for his journey than his mother thought he should. Mr. Woodchuck's knee was very bad, and whenever he had rheumatism he was more pessimistic than usual. "I tell you," said he, "that boy will never get home. He doesn't know his right hand from his left." "I tell you he does," said Mrs. Woodchuck; "I tried him on it just before he went." "I wouldn't be surprised," Mr. Woodchuck stuck to his position, "if he had turned out

that left-hand door, into the garden and had gone to the garage instead of the barn. There is one thing sure; if he tries to get corn out of that dog kennel, he will find out his mistake." Mr. Woodchuck's lack of sympathy always irritated his wife.

"Keep still," she said, "you will give me nervous prostration again if you keep saying such things."

Monax had climbed up onto the board. He paused to look around a moment. Then thinking that he must not be quite so leisurely, he jumped quickly through the little window just under the roof.

Then things began to happen so fast that Monax could hardly keep track of them. For what Monax had really done was just what his father said he probably would do. He had turned to the left every time, where he ought to have turned to the right. He had gone through the garden instead of the cornfield, past the cement horse-block instead of the big stone, mistaken the garage for the barn, and now, worst luck of all, he had jumped into the dog kennel instead of into the corn-crib.

The old dog had been after the sheep and cows, and was fast asleep on the floor of his kennel. Still, he didn't propose to lie there and be jumped on by a woodchuck—not in his own kennel. And Monax—well, perhaps he wasn't surprised when, instead of landing on top of a crib of corn he fell clear to the bottom, and felt his feet touching something furry that moved. But it didn't have time to move much. Monax felt

that a crisis had arrived in his career, and it was time to act. He didn't wait to look for the door of the kennel; he didn't want to try any more new routes. He just rebounded off the back of the dog like a rubber ball from the pavement. Up he went, breaking the woodchuck record for the high jump, back through the window, onto the board, down to the ground quick as a flash. The dog was after him, but Monax was six feet ahead. Away he went, past the barn; the auto was just backing out; it came over Monax that it wasn't a barn after all. He dodged under the machine; the dog had to run around it; three feet more gained. He went by the big stone at full speed, —it looked more than ever to him like a cement horse-block. Past the two scarescrows; he could see that they had moved quite a little since he passed them coming out, and one of them had a gun now. Bang, it went; he felt the shot pass through his tail, and it increased his speed to forty miles. He didn't have much time to reflect, but it did come over him that those were not scarecrows, but men, and that what he had overheard them say a half hour before about the "young uns being good to eat" might possibly have had some reference to himself. On he sped, through the garden; it was perfectly plain now that it had never been a corn-field, and on like a flash through the garden door into the loghouse, and into his father's room—fluttering, trembling, and more dead than alive.

"Did you turn to the right?" asked his mother.

"I did—on the way back," said Monax.

THE NUTCRACKERS OF NUTCRACKER LODGE

Mr. and Mrs. Nutcracker were as respectable a pair of squirrels as ever wore gray brushes over their backs. They lived in Nutcracker Lodge, a hole in a sturdy old chestnut tree overhanging a shady dell. Here they had reared many families of young Nutcrackers, who were models of good behavior in the forest.

But it happened in the course of time that they had a son named Featherhead, who was as different from all the other children of the Nutcracker family as if he had been dropped out of the moon into their nest. He was handsome enough, and had a lively disposition, but he was sulky and contrary and unreasonable. He found fault with everything his respectable papa and mama did. Instead of helping with the cares of the family,—picking up nuts and learning other lessons proper to a young squirrel,—he sneered at all the good old ways and customs of the Nutcracker Lodge, and said they were behind the times. To be sure he was always on hand at meal times, and played a very lively tooth on the nuts which his mother had collected, always selecting the best for himself.

But he seasoned his nibbling with much grumbling and discontent.

Papa Nutcracker would often lose his patience, and say something sharp to Featherhead, but Mamma Nutcracker would shed tears, and beg her darling boy to be a little more reasonable.

While his parents, brothers, and sisters were cheerfully racing up and down the branches laying up stores for the winter, Featherhead sat apart, sulking and scolding.

Nobody understands me," he grumbled. "Nobody treats me as I deserve to be treated. Surely I was born to be something of more importance than gathering a few chestnuts and hickory-nuts for the winter. I am an unusual squirrel."

"Depend upon it, my dear," said Mrs. Nutcracker to her husband, "that boy is a genius."

"Fiddlestick on his genius!" said old Mr. Nutcracker; "what does he *do?*"

"Oh, nothing, of course, but they say that is one of the marks of genuis. Remarkable people, you know, never come down to common life."

"He eats enough for any two," said old Nutcracker, "and he never helps gather nuts."

"But, my dear, Parson Too-Whit, who has talked with Featherhead, says the boy has very fine feelings,—so much above those of the common crowd."

"Feelings be hanged," snapped old Nutcracker. "When

a fellow eats all the nuts that his mother gives him, and then grumbles at her, I don't believe much in his fine feelings. Why doesn't he do something? I'm going to tell my fine young gentleman that if he doesn't behave himself I'll tumble him out of the nest neck and crop, and see if hunger won't do something toward bringing down his fine airs."

"Oh, my dear," sobbed Mrs. Nutcracker, falling on her husband's neck with both paws, "do be patient with our darling boy."

Now although the Nutcrackers belonged to the fine old race of the Greys, they kept on the best of terms with all branches of the squirrel family. They were very friendly to the Chipmunks of Chipmunk Hollow. Young Tip Chipmunk, the oldest son, was in all respects a perfect contrast to Master Featherhead. Tip was lively and cheerful, and very alert in getting food for the family. Indeed, Mr. and Mrs. Chipmunk had very little care, but could sit at the door of their hole and chat with neighbours, quite sure that Tip would bring everything out right for them, and have plenty laid up for winter.

"What a commonplace fellow that Tip Chipmunk is," sneered Featherhead one day. "I shall take care not to associate with him."

"My dear, you are too hard on poor Tip," said Mrs. Nutcracker. "He is a very good son, I'm sure."

"Oh, I don't doubt he's good enough," said Featherhead, "but he's so common. He hasn't an idea in his skull above

his nuts and Chipmunk Hollow. He is good-natured enough, but, dear me, he has no manners! I hope, mother, you won't invite the Chipmunks to the Thankgiving dinner—these family dinners are such a bore."

"But, my dear Featherhead, your father thinks a great deal of the Chipmunks—they are our relatives you know," said Mother Nutcracker.

"So are the High-Flyers our relatives. If we could get them to come, there would be some sense to it. But of course a flying squirrel would never come to our house if a common chipmunk is a guest. It isn't to be expected," said Featherhead.

"Confound him for a puppy," said old Nutcracker. "I wish good, industrious sons like Tip Chipmunk *were* common."

But in the end Featherhead had his way, and the Chipmunks were not invited to Nutcracker Lodge for Thanksgiving dinner. However, they were not all offended. Indeed, Tip called early in the morning to pay his compliments of the season, and leave a few dainty beechnuts.

"He can't even see that he is not wanted here," sneered Featherhead.

At last old papa declared it was time for Featherhead to choose some business.

"What are you going to do, my boy?" he asked. "We are

driving now a thriving trade in hickory nuts, and if you would like to join us——"

"Thank you," said Featherhead, "the hickory trade is too slow for me. I was never made to grub and delve in that way. In fact I have my own plans."

To be plain, Featherhead had formed a friendship with the Rats of Rat Hollow—a race of people whose honesty was doubtful. Old Longtooth Rat was a money-lender, and for a time he had had his eye on Featherhead as a person silly enough to suit the business which was neither more nor less than downright stealing.

Near Nutcracker Lodge was a large barn filled with corn and grain, besides many bushels of hazelnuts, chestnuts and walnuts. Now old Longtooth told Featherhead that he should nibble a passage into the loft, and set up a commission business there—passing out nuts and grain as Longtooth wanted them. He did not tell Featherhead a certain secret—namely, that a Scotch terrier was about to be bought to keep rats from the grain.

"How foolish such drudging fellows as Tip Chipmunk are!" said Featherhead to himself. "There he goes picking up a nut here and a grain there; whereas, I step into property at once."

"I hope you are honest in your dealings, my son," said old Nutcracker.

Featherhead threw his tail saucily over one shoulder and

laughed. "Certainly, sir, if honesty means getting what you can while it is going, I mean to be honest.

Very soon Featherhead seemed to be very prosperous. He had a splendid hole in the midst of a heap of chestnuts, and he seemed to be rolling in wealth. He lavished gifts on his mother and sisters; he carried his tail very proudly over his back. He was even gracious to Tip Chipmunk.

But one day as Featherhead was lolling in his hole, up came two boys with the friskiest, wiriest Scotch terrier you ever saw. His eyes blazed like torches. Featherhead's heart died within him as he heard the boys say, "Now we'll see if we can catch the rascal that eats our grain."

Featherhead tried to slink out of the hole he had gnawed to come in by, but found it stopped.

"Oh, you are there, are you, Mister?" cried the boy. "Well, you don't get out, and now for a chase."

And sure enough poor Featherhead ran with terror up and down through the bundles of hay. But the barking terrier was at his heels, and the boys shouted and cheered. He was glad at last to escape through a crack, though he left half of his fine brush behind him—for Master Wasp, the terrier, made a snap at it just as Featherhead was squeezing through. Alas! all the hair was cleaned off so that it was bare as a rat's tail.

Poor Featherhead limped off, bruised and beaten, with the dog and boys still after him, and they would have caught him

if Tip Chipmunk's hole had not stood open to receive him. Tip took the best of care of him, but the glory of Featherhead's tail had gone forever. From that time, though, he was a sadder and a wiser squirrel than he ever had been before.

HOW THERE CAME TO BE A KATY-DID

Long, long, long ago—so long that this story has had time to grow into a garden legend—two green grasshoppers went out one fine day, to play with a cricket. They played *tag,* and *I'm on gypsyland.* At last they decided to have a game of hide-and-seek.

The goal was a blade of grass, and they counted out to see who should be goal man. It fell to the little cricket, Katy-did. She was to hide her eyes behind the grassblade, and count up to one hundred by tens, while the two grasshoppers went off to hide.

The cricket hid her face so that she could not see, and began: "Ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, one hundred! Coming!"

Though there were plenty of good places in which to hide in the garden, one green grasshopper had been slow to suit himself. He had not yet hidden when the little cricket turned about and caught him.

And he began, "You didn't count up to a hundred! I didn't have time to hide! You should have hollered, 'Com-

ing!' It's no fair! I'm not going to play any more—you didn't count up to a hundred!"

At this, the other grasshopper came out of hiding. "She did count up to a hundred," he said, "Katy did!"

"She didn't!"

"She did!"

"She didn't!"

"Katy did, did, did!"

"Katy didn't, didn't, didn't!"

"Did, did, did!"

"Didn't, didn't, didn't!"

"She did!"

"She didn't!"

"Katy did!"

"Katy didn't!"

To this very, very day, you can hear the dispute still going on in the garden, and the game of tag has never yet been finished. Ever since that time the grasshoppers who started the discussion have been called katydids, and the whole garden is full of the controversy. You can hear hundreds of little voices keeping it up, though nothing is ever decided. So it goes on eternally, Katy did— Katy didn't, did, did, did, didn't, didn't, she did, she didn't—for nobody has ever yet settled a dispute by contradiction. By this time, too, everyone has forgotten what the quarrel was about.

From "The Bluebird's Garden." Used by special permission of the author and the Pilgrim Press.

A TURKEY FOR THE STUFFING

It always made Ben feel solemn to watch the river in a storm. To-day it was grey, and rough and noisy, and the few boats, which went down toward Lake Huron, pitched about so that their decks slanted first one way, then another, and their sides were coated with ice.

"Gran'ma, what day's to-day?" he asked at last, turning from the stormy river to glance about their warm, comfortable little room.

"Wednesday, Benny," answered the small old woman who crouched over the stove.

"Then to-morrow will be Thanksgiving day, and the Rosses are going to have a turkey," said Ben, excitedly. "What are we going to have, Gran'ma?"

Mrs. Moxon looked over her glasses at her grandson's small, thin figure in its patched and faded clothes, and at his bright, eager face.

"Sonny, dear, what do you think Gran'ma has for Thanksgiving?" she asked gently.

The expectant look faded from Ben's face, and he winked hard to keep the tears from running over. He did not need

to be told how bare of dainties their cupboard was, for everything there he had brought with his own hands. Bacon and smoked fish enough for all winter were stored away; flour, potatoes, and a few other vegetables were there.

"Tell me about a real Thanksgiving dinner," the small boy begged after the first disappointment had been bravely put away. Mrs. Moxon took off her spectacles, and leaned back cautiously in her broken-rockered chair.

"I remember one Thanksgiving when your pa was alive, we had a dinner fit for a king. There was a ten-pound turkey, with bread stuffing. I put the sage and onions into the stuffing with my own hands."

"We could have some stuffing," interrupted Ben, eagerly.

"So we could, sonny, so we could. It takes you to think of things," and Mrs. Moxon affectionately patted the little brown hand on her knee. "It never would 'a' come to me that we might have turkey stuffing even if we didn't have any turkey."

Ben beamed with delight at this praise. "And was there anything else besides the turkey and the stuffing, Gran'ma?"

"Land, yes child. There was turnips, and mashed potatoes and mince pie, and your pa got two pounds of grapes, though grapes was expensive at that time o' year. Yes, nobody could ask for a better dinner than that was."

"We could have one just like it, all but the turkey and the mince pie and the grapes," said Ben hopefully.

"So we can, and will, too, child," answered the old woman. "Trust you for making the best of things," and the two smiled at each other happily.

Next morning Ben watched his grandmother add an egg, some sage and chopped onion to a bowlful of dry bread, pour boiling water over it, and put the mixture in the oven.

"Your father said I made the best turkey stuffing he ever ate," she said with satisfaction. "We'll see how it comes out, Benny."

"I can't hardly wait till dinner-time," Ben said, with an excited skip. "I b'lieve I'll go down to the beach, and pick up driftwood for a while. You call me when the things are most cooked, Gran'ma."

The storm of the day before had left many a bit of board or end of a log on the beach that would be just the thing for Mrs. Moxon's stove. Ben worked so hard that he did not notice a big barge that was coming slowly down the river, towing two other boats behind it, until he heard a voice ask:

"Hullo, kid! What makes you work so hard on Thanksgiving day?"

Then he straightened up, to see the boat's captain standing near its pilot house, and shouting through a great trumpet.

"I'm waiting for dinner to cook," Ben answered in his piping voice.

"Can't hear you!" roared the captain. "Run home and get your horn, and talk to me."

Ben ran up the little hill to Mrs. Ross's, and borrowed her trumpet, or megaphone. One's voice sounds much louder when these are used, and they are to be found at every house on the shores of the St. Mary's, for the people on the boats, and those on the land, often want to say, "How do you do?" to each other. It was all Ben could do to hold the great tin trumpet on straight, for it was nearly as long as he was.

"I'm waiting for dinner to cook," the boy shouted again, and this time the captain heard him.

"Going to have turkey, I suppose?" the captain asked.

"No, but we're going to have turkey stuffing," answered Ben with pride.

"Turkey stuffing, but no turkey! If that isn't the best I ever heard!" The captain had dropped his trumpet, and doubled up with sudden laughter. Luckily Ben did not hear. "What else are you going to have?" he called when he had repeated the joke about him. "Mince pie without any mince meat?"

"No, sir!" Ben's voice was shrill, but clear. "My father had mince pie for Thanksgiving dinner once, though."

"Did, did he?" The captain dropped his trumpet again. "That boy's all right," he said to the first mate. "He's too plucky to be laughed at. I'm going to send him some turkey for his stuffing, Morgan. Tell the cook to get ready half a turkey and a mince pie, and say, Morgan, have him send up one of those small baskets of grapes. We'll tie them to a

piece of plank, and they'll float ashore all right. Tell the cook to hurry, or we'll be too far downstream for the boy to get the things." Then he raised his trumpet again.

"Say, kid, can you row that boat that's tied to your dock?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you hurry out into the river, and I'll put off a float with some things for your Thanksgiving dinner. You're going to have some turkey for that stuffing."

You may be sure Ben lost no time in pushing the rowboat off into the stream, where the end of a plank and its delicious load were soon bobbing up and down on the water. How he did smack his lips when he lifted them into the boat, and how pleased he was for grandma!

"First the stuffing, and then the turkey! My, ain't I lucky?" He did not know that the captain had said he was plucky, and that luck is very apt to follow pluck.

THE DEBUT OF "DAN'L WEBSTER"

"I guess you can get the ell roof shingled now, 'most any old time," cried Homer Tidd. He bounced in at the kitchen door. A blast of icy wind followed him.

"Gracious! shet the door, Homer, an' then tell me your news." His mother shivered and pulled a little brown shawl tighter about her shoulders. The boy planted himself behind the stove and laid his mittened hands comfortably around the pipe. "Oh, I've made a great deal, Mother." Homer's freckled face glowed with satisfaction.

"What?" asked Mrs. Tidd.

"Did you see the man that jest druv out o' the yard?"

"No, I didn't, Homer."

"Well, 'twas Mr. Richards—the Mr. Richards o' Finch & Richards, the big market folks over in the city."

"Has he bought your Thanksgivin' turkeys?"

"He hain't bought 'em for Thanksgivin'."

"Well, what are you so set up about, boy?"

"He's rented the hull flock. He's to pay me three dollars a day for them, then he's goin' to buy them all for Christmas."

"Land sakes! Three dollars a day." Mrs. Tidd dropped

one side of a pan of apples she was carrying, and some of them went rolling about the kitchen floor.

Homer nodded.

"For how long?" she asked eagerly.

"For a week." Homer's freckles disappeared in the crimson glow of enthusiasm that overspread his face.

"Eighteen dollars for nothin' but exhibitin' a bunch o' turkeys! Seems to me some folks must have money to throw away." Mrs. Tidd stared perplexedly over the top of her glasses.

"I'll tell you all about it, Mother." Homer took a chair and planted his feet on the edge of the oven. "Mr. Richards is goin' to have a great Thanksgivin' food show, an' he wants a flock o' live turkeys. He's been drivin' round the country lookin' for some. The postmaster sent him here. He told him about Dan'l Webster's tricks."

"They don't make Dan'l any better eatin'," objected his mother.

"Maybe not. But don't you see? Well!"

Homer's laugh was an embarrassed one. "I'm goin' to put Dan'l an' Gettysburg through their tricks right in the store window."

"You ben't?" and the mother looked in rapt admiration at her clever son.

"I be!" answered Homer, triumphantly.

"I don't know, boy, jest what I think o' it," said his

mother, slowly. "Tain't exactly a—a gentlemanly sort o' thing to do; be it?"

"I reckon I ben't a gentleman, Mother," replied Homer, with his jolly laugh.

"Tell me all about it."

"Well, I was feedin' the turkeys when Mr. Richards druv in. He said he heered I had some trick turkeys, an' he'd like to see 'em. Lucky enough, I hadn't fed 'em; they was awful hungry, an' I tell you they never did their tricks better."

"What did Mr. Richards say?"

"He thought it was the most amazin' thing he'd ever seen in his life. He said he wouldn't have believed turkeys had enough gumption in them to learn a trick o' any kind."

"Did you tell him how you'd fussed with them ever since they was little chicks?"

"I did. He wuz real interested, an' he offered me three dollars to give a show three times a day. He's got a window half as big as this kitchen. He'll have it wired in, an' the turkeys 'll stay there at his expense. Along before Christmas he'll give me twenty-two cents a pound for 'em."

"Well, I vow, Homer, it's pretty good pay."

"Mr. Richards give me a commutation on the railroad. He's to send after the turkeys an' bring 'em back, so I won't have any expense."

Homer rose and sauntered about the kitchen, picking up the apples that had rolled in all directions over the floor.

A week before Thanksgiving, the corner in front of Finch & Richard's great market looked as it was wont to look on circus day: only the eyes of the crowds were not turned expectantly up Main Street; they were riveted on a window in the big store. Passers-by tramped out into the snowy street when they reached the mob at the corner. The front of the store was decorated with a fringe of plump turkeys. One window had held a glowing mountain of fruit and vegetables arranged by some one with a keen eye for colour—monstrous pumpkins, splendid purple cabbages, rosy apples and russet pears, green and purple grapes, snowy stalks of celery, and corn ears yellow as sunshine. Crimson beets neighboured with snowy parsnips, scarlet carrots, and silk-wrapped onions. Egg-plants, gleaming like deep-hued amethysts, circled about magnificent cauliflowers, while red and yellow bananas made gay mosaic walks through the fruit mountain. Wherever a crack or a cranny had been left, was a mound of ruby cranberries, fine raisin bunches, or brown nuts.

It was a remarkable display of American products; yet, after the first "Ah" of admiration, people passed on to the farther window, where six plump turkeys, supremely innocent of a feast-day fête, flapped their wings or gobbled impertinently when a small boy laid his nose flat against the window. Three times a day the crowd grew twenty deep. It laughed

and shouted and elbowed one another good-naturedly, for the Thanksgiving spirit was abroad. Men tossed children up on their stalwart shoulders, then small hands clapped ecstatically, and small legs kicked with wild enthusiasm.

The hero of the hour was a freckled, red-haired boy, who came leaping through a wire door with an old broom over his shoulders. Every turkey waited for him eagerly, hungrily! They knew that each old, familiar trick—leaned away back in chickhood—would earn a good feed. When the freckled boy began to whistle, or when his voice rang out in a shrill order, it was the signal for Dan'l Webster, for Gettysburg, for Amanda Ann, Mehitable, Nancy, or Farragut to step to the center of the stage and do some irresistibly funny turn with a turkey's bland solemnity. None of the birds had attacks of stage fright—their acting was as self-possessed as if they were in the old farm yard with no audience present but Mrs. Tidd to lean smiling over the fence with a word of praise, and the coveted handful of golden corn.

With every performance the crowd grew more dense, the applause more uproarious, and the Thanksgiving trade at Finch & Richard's bigger than it had been in years. Each night Homer took the last train home, tired but happy, for three crisp greenbacks were added to the roll in his small, shabby wallet.

Two days before Thanksgiving, Homer, in his blue overalls and faded sweater; was busy at work. The grey of the

dawn was just creeping into the east, while the boy went hurrying through his chores. There was still a man's work to be done before he took the ten o'clock train to town; besides, he had promised to help his mother about the house. His grandfather, an uncle, an aunt, and three small cousins were coming to eat their Thanksgiving feast at the old farmhouse. Homer whistled gaily, while he bedded the creatures with fresh straw. The whistle trailed into an indistinct trill; the boy felt a pang of loneliness as he glanced into the turkey-pen. There was nobody there but old Mother Salvia. Homer tossed her a handful of corn. "Poor old lady, I s'pose you're lonesome, ain't you, now? Never mind; when spring comes you'll be scratchin' round with a hull raft of nice little chickies at your heels. We'll teach them a fine trick or two, won't we, old Salvia?"

Salvia clucked over the corn appreciatively.

"Homer, Homer, come here quick."

Down the frozen path through the yard came Mrs. Tidd, with the little brown shawl wrapped tightly about her head. She fluttered a yellow envelope in her hand.

"Homer boy, it's a telegraph come. I can't read it; I've mislaid my glasses."

Homer was by her side in a minute, tearing open the flimsy envelope.

"It's from Finch & Richards, Mother," he cried excitedly. "They say, 'Take the first train to town without fail.' "

"What do you s'pose they want you for?" asked Mrs. Tidd, with a very anxious face.

"P'r'aps the store's burned down," gasped Homer. He brushed one rough hand across his eyes. "Poor Dan'l Webster an' Gettysburg! I didn't know anybody could set so much store by turkeys."

"Maybe 't ain't nothin' bad, Homer," Mrs. Tidd laid her hand upon his shoulder. "Maybe they want you to give an extra early show or somethin'." She suggested it cheerfully.

"Maybe," echoed Homer. "But, Mother, I've got to hurry to catch that 7:30 train."

"Let me go with you, Homer."

"You don't need to," cried the boy. "It probably ain't nothin' serious."

"I'm goin'," cried Mrs. Tidd decisively; "you don't s'pose I could stay here doin' nothin' but waitin' an' wond'rin'?"

Mrs. Tidd and Homer caught a car at the city depot. Five minutes later they stood in front of Finch & Richards' big market.

"Mother," whispered the boy, as he stepped off the car, "Mother, my turkeys! They're not there! Something's happened. See the crowd."

They pushed their way through a mob that was peering in at the windows, and through the windows of locked doors. The row of plump turkeys was not hung this morning under

the big sign; the magnificent window display of fruit and vegetables had been ruthlessly demolished.

"What do you s'pose can have happened?" whispered Mrs. Tidd, while they waited for a clerk to come hurrying down the store and unlock the door.

Homer shook his head.

Mr. Richards himself came to greet them.

"Well, young man," he cried, "I've had enough of your pesky bird show. There's a hundred dollars' worth of provisions gone, to say nothing of the trade we are turning way. Two days before Thanksgiving, of all times in the year!"

"Good land!" whispered Mrs. Tidd. Her eyes were wandering about the store. It was scattered from one end to the other with wasted food. Sticky rivers trickled here and there across the floor. A small army of clerks was hard at work sweeping and mopping.

"Your turkeys, confound them!" snarled Mr. Richards. "They're safe and sound in their crate in my back store, all but that blasted old gobbler you call Dan'l Webster. He's doing his stunts on a top shelf. We found him there tearing cereal packages into shreds. For mercy's sake, go and see if you can't get him down. He has almost pecked the eyes out of every clerk who has tried to lay a finger on him. I'd like to wring his ugly neck."

Mr. Richard's face grew red as the comb of Dan'l Webster himself.

Homer and his mother dashed across the store. High above their heads strutted Dan'l Webster with a slow, stately tread. Occasionally he peered down at the ruin and confusion below, commenting upon it with a lordly, satisfied, gobble.

"Dan'l Webster," called Homer, coaxingly, "good old Dan'l, come an' see me."

The boy slipped cautiously along to where a step-ladder stood.

"Dan'l," he called persuasively, "wouldn't you like to come home, Dan'l?"

Dan'l perked down with pleased recognition in his eyes. Homer crept up the ladder. He was preparing to lay a hand on one of Dan'l's black legs when the turkey hopped away with a triumphant gobble, and went racing gleefully along the wide shelf. A row of bottles filled with salad-dressing stood in Dan'l's path. He cleared them out of the way with one energetic kick. They tumbled to a lower shelf; their yellow contents crept in a sluggish stream toward the mouth of a tea-box.

"I'll have that bird shot!" thundered Mr. Richards. "That's all there is about it."

"Wait a minute, sir," pleaded Mrs. Tidd. "Homer'll get him."

Dan'l Webster would neither be coaxed nor commanded. He wandered up and down the shelf, gobbling vociferously into the faces of the excited mob.

"Henry, go and get a pistol," cried Mr. Richards, turning to one of his clerks.

"Homer,"—Mrs. Tidd clutched the boy's arm,—"why don't you make b'lieve you're shootin' Dan'l? Maybe he'll lie down, so you can get him."

Homer called for a broom. He tossed it, gun fashion, across his shoulder, and crept along slowly, sliding a ladder before him to the spot where the turkey stood watching with intent eyes. He put one foot upon the lowest step, then he burst out in a spirited whistle. It was "Marching through Georgia." The bird stared at him fixedly.

"Bang!" cried Homer, and he pointed the broom straight at the recreant turkey.

Dan'l Webster dropped stiff. A second later Homer had a firm grasp of the scaly legs. Dan'l returned instantly to life, but the rebellious head was tucked under his master's jacket. Dan'l Webster thought he was being strangled to death.

"There!" cried Homer, triumphantly. He closed the lid of the poultry crate, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "There! I guess you won't get out again."

He followed Mr. Richards to the front of the store to view the devastation.

"Who'd have thought turkeys could have ripped up strong wire like that?" cried the enraged market man, pointing to the shattered door.

"I guess Dan'l began the mischief," said Homer soberly; "he's awful strong."

"I'm sorry I ever laid eyes on Dan'l!" exclaimed Mr. Richards. "I'll hate to see Finch. He'll be in on the 4:20 train. He's conservative; he never had any use for the turkey show."

"When did you find out that they—what had happened?" asked Homer timidly.

"At five o'clock. Two of the men got here early. They telephoned me. I never saw such destruction in my life. Your turkeys had sampled most everything in the store, from split peas to molasses. What they did't eat they knocked over or tore-open. I guess they won't need feeding for a week. They're chuckful of oatmeal, beans, crackers, peanuts, pickles, toothpicks, prunes, soap, red herrings, cabbage—about everything their crops can hold."

"I'm awfully sorry," faltered Homer.

"So am I," said Mr. Richards resolutely. "Now, the best thing you can do is to take your flock and clear out. I've had enough of performing turkeys."

Homer and his mother waited at the depot for the 11 o'clock train. Besides them stood a crate filled with turkeys that wore a well-fed, satisfied expression. Somebody tapped Homer on the shoulder.

"You're the boy who does the stunts with turkeys, aren't

you?" asked a well-dressed man with a silk hat, and a flower in his buttonhole.

"Yes," answered the boy, wonderingly.

"I've been hunting for you. That was a great rumpus you made at Finch & Richards'. The whole town's talking about it."

"Yes, answered Homer again, and he blushed scarlet.

"Taking your turkeys home?"

Homer nodded.

"I've come to see if we can keep them in town a few days longer."

The boy shook his head vigorously. "I don't want any more turkey shows."

"Not if the price is big enough to make it worth your while?"

"No!" said Homer sturdily.

"Let us go into the station and talk it over."

On Thanksgiving afternoon the Colonial Theater, the best vaudeville house in the city, held a throng that was dined well, and was happy enough to appreciate any sort of fun. The children—hundreds of them—shrieked with delight over every act. The women laughed, the men applauded with great hearty hand-claps. A little buzz of excitement went round the house when, at the end of the fourth turn, two boys, instead of setting up the regulation big red number, displayed a brand

new card. It read: "Extra Number—Homer Tidd and his Performing Turkeys." A shout of delighted anticipation went up from the audience. Every paper in town had made a spectacular story of the ruin at Finch & Richards'. Nothing could have been so splendid a surprise. Everybody broke into applause, everybody except one little woman who sat in the front row of the orchestra. Her face was pale, her hands clasped, and unclasped each other tremulously. "Homer, boy," she whispered to herself.

The curtain rolled up. The stage was set for a realistic farmyard scene. The floor was scattered with straw, an old pump leaned over in one corner, hay tumbled untidily from a barn-loft, a coop with a hen and chickens stood by the fence. From her stall stared a white-faced cow; her eyes blinked at the glare of the footlights. The orchestra struck up a merry tune; the cow uttered an astonished moo; then in walked a sturdy lad with fine, broad shoulders, red hair, and freckles. His boots clumped, his blue overalls were faded, his sweater had once been red. At his heels stepped six splendid turkeys, straight in line, every one with its eyes on the master. Homer never knew how he did it. Two minutes earlier he had said to the manager, desperately: "I'll cut an' run right off as soon as I set eyes on folks." Perhaps he drew courage from the anxious gaze in his mother's eyes. Hers was the only face he saw in the great audience. Perhaps it was the magnificent aplomb of the turkeys that inspired him. They stepped

serenely, as if walking out on a gorgeously lighted stage was an every-day event in their lives. Anyhow, Homer threw up his head, and led the turkey march round and round past the footlights, till the shout of applause dwindled into silence. The boy threw back his head and snapped his fingers. The turkeys retreated to form in line at the back of the stage.

"Gettysburg," cried Homer, pointing to a stately, plump hen. Gettysburg stepped to the center of the stage. "How many kernels of corn have I thrown you, Getty?" he asked.

The turkey turned to count them, with her head cocked reflectively on one side. Then she scratched her foot on the floor.

"One, two, three, four, five!"

"Right. Now you may eat them, Getty."

Gettysburg wore her new-won laurels with an excellent grace. She jumped through a row of hoops, slid gracefully about the stage on a pair of miniature roller-skates; she stepped from stool to chair, from chair to table, in perfect time with Homer's whistle, and a low strain of melody from the orchestra. She danced a stately jig on the table, then, with a satisfied cluck, descended on the other side to the floor. Amanda Ann, Mehitable, Nancy, and Farragut achieved their triumphs in a slow dance made up of dignified hops and mazy turns. They stood in a decorous line awaiting the return of their master, for Homer had dashed suddenly from the stage. He reappeared, holding his head up proudly. Now he wore

the blue uniform and jaunty cap of a soldier boy; a gun leaned on his shoulder.

The orchestra put all its vigor, patriotism, and wind into "Marching through Georgia."

Straight to Homer's side when they heard his whistle, wheeled the turkey regiment, ready to keep step, to fall in line, to march and countermarch. Only one feather soldier fell. It was Dan'l Webster. At a bang from Homer's rifle he dropped stiff and stark. From children here and there in the audience came a cry of horror. They turned to ask in frightened whispers if the turkey was "truly shooted." As if to answer the question, Dan'l leaped to his feet. Homer pulled a Stars and Stripes from his pocket, and waved it enthusiastically; then the orchestra dashed into "Yankee Doodle." It awoke some patriotic spirit in the soul of Dan'l Webster. He left his master, and, puffing himself to his stateliest proportions, stalked to the foot-lights to utter one glorious, soul-stirring gobble. The curtain fell, but the applause went on and on and on! At last, out again across the stage came Homer, waving "Old Glory." Dan'l Webster, Gettysburg, Amanda Ann, Nancy, Mehitable and Farragut followed in a triumphal march. Homer's eyes were bent past the foot-lights, searching for the face of one little woman. This time the face was one radiant flush, and her hands were adding their share to the deafening applause.

"Homer, boy," she said fondly. This time she spoke aloud, but nobody heard it. An encore for the "Extra Turn" was so vociferous, it almost shook the plaster from the ceiling.

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GINGER

One winter morning a heavy dray rumbled slowly along the street, and at last drew up to the sidewalk in front of a large dry-goods shop. On one side of the seat sat the big driver, muffled in a wolfskin coat, and on the other side sat a solid-looking yellow dog, with sharp, upstanding ears and bushy eyebrows that almost hid the twinkling eyes beneath them.

As the dray stopped, people who were passing glanced a moment at the dog, and smiled as they went on. It was not because he was such a plain homely yellow dog, or because he looked so wide-awake and good-natured, but because of the way he was dressed. His kind-hearted master, feeling the cold himself, and knowing that Ginger, the dog, which was his friend and helper, must also feel it, had taken an old gunny-sack, folded it together, wrapped it round Ginger's neck and body, and fastened it with two safety-pins. And so Ginger sat there, like a little old man in a shawl, as comfortable as could be, and probably thinking how hard it was that other dogs that did not work for a living, and who had no kind master,

must go all winter with no overcoat, and nothing except their bare skin to keep them warm.

The driver threw the reins over one of the seat-posts, climbed down, pinned a blanket round the horse's chest, and then came back to lift a heavy bundle from the dray. As he turned, he looked up at the dog, nodded his head toward the other bundles, and said, "Watch 'em, old boy!" And Ginger wagged his stubby tail till the ends of the gunny-sack bobbed up and down.

As soon as the driver had gone, Ginger began to watch the faces of all the people who passed, and to look very sharply at any one who came too near the dray. When a messenger boy tried to tease him by making believe that he was going to take a package from the dray, Ginger leaped down from his seat, dashed to the back of the wagon, and barked furiously. His little eyes snapped and his white teeth showed. Not till the boy had gone away did Ginger hop back to the seat, to take up again his task of guarding his master's property.

Then came a big red automobile, and drew up to the sidewalk, facing the dray. On one of the seats sat a woman dressed all in fur, and by her side a dog that looked as if he had too much to eat. He was very sleek and fat. His smooth skin glistened and his little nose turned up in a way that said very plainly, "It is not every dog that I care to meet. Do you see this plush overcoat? Well, I never wear anything else in cold weather." It is true that he did have on a warm

green plush coat that fitted him perfectly, and was held in place by little shining buckles.

"Now, Pedro, you stay right there," said the woman, as she got out and went into the store; and for a few seconds Pedro did stay. But it was plain to see that he was a spoiled dog and used to having his own way; for his mistress was hardly gone before he was out of the automobile and down on the sidewalk.

Ginger looked at him with a friendly eye, and barked in a way that said quite plainly, "Good morning! Pretty cold to-day, isn't it?" But Pedro turned up his pug nose a little higher, and strutted away with an air that showed how unreasonable it was to expect him to pay attention to a plain working dog that had to wear an old gunny-sack for an overcoat.

He walked slowly to the corner. Just as he reached it, without any warning something big and black and shaggy hit him full in the face and threw him over backward. It was a great Newfoundland dog, which did not even give him time to get up, but pounced upon him again, and began to chew his ears and roll him head over heels in the snow.

Yelping at the top of his voice for help, Pedro tried to get back to the automobile, but before he was halfway, the big Newfoundland had him again. Then something hit the big dog in the neck. It looked like a huge hundle of burlap rags, but it had four legs and big, sharp white teeth, and was full

of growls. It hit so hard that the Newfoundland, in his turn, went over on his back. Before he could get up, the bundle of burlap—with Ginger inside it—had him by one fore leg, and was trying to swing him from side to side. Over and over they rolled. Ginger's old coat flapped back and forth, and the snow flew this way and that, until at last the Newfoundland broke away, and with his tail between his legs, dashed down the street. Ginger gazed after him a moment, then climbed back to his seat. He looked across at the automobile. Pedro had gone back to his place, but he did not appear to be nearly so proud now. His plush coat was torn and covered with dirty snow, and both his ears were cut and sore. It was hard to tell just what Ginger thought as he looked at him. Perhaps it was this: "He isn't much of a dog, but I couldn't sit still and see a big fellow whip a little one."

Then Ginger's master came out and climbed up beside him. "Well, old boy," he said, "did you watch 'em?" Ginger wagged his tail, but he did not say a word.

THE PUMPKIN GIANT

A VERY long time ago, before our grandmother's time, or our great-grandmother's, or our grandmothers' with a very long string of greats prefixed, there were no pumpkins; people had never eaten a pumpkin-pie, or even stewed pumpkin; and that was the time when the Pumpkin Giant flourished.

There have been a great many giants who have flourished since the world began, and, although a select few of them have been good giants, the majority of them have been so bad that their crimes even more than their size have gone to make them notorious. But the Pumpkin Giant was an uncommonly bad one, and his general appearance and his behaviour were such as to make one shudder to an extent that you would hardly believe possible. The convulsive shivering caused by the mere mention of his name, and, in some cases where the people were unusually sensitive, by the mere thought of him even, more resembled the blue ague than anything else; indeed it was known by the name of "the Giant's Shakes."

The Pumpkin Giant was very tall; he probably would have overtopped most of the giants you have ever heard of. I don't suppose the Giant who lived on the Bean-stalk whom Jack

visited was anything to compare with him; nor that it would have been a possible thing for the Pumpkin Giant, had he received an invitation to spend an afternoon with the Bean-stalk Giant, to accept, on account of his inability to enter the Bean-stalk Giant's door, no matter how much he stooped.

The Pumpkin Giant had a very large, yellow head, which was also smooth and shiny. His eyes were big and round, and glowed like coals of fire; and you would almost have thought that his head was lit up inside with candles. Indeed there was a rumour to that effect amongst the common people, but that was all nonsense, of course; no one of the more enlightened class credited it for an instant. His mouth, which stretched half around his head, was furnished with rows of pointed teeth, and he was never known to hold it any other way than wide open.

The Pumpkin Giant lived in a castle, as a matter of course; it is not fashionable for a giant to live in any other kind of a dwelling—why, nothing would be more tame and uninteresting than a giant in a two-story white house with green blinds and a picket fence, or even a brown-stone front, if he could get into either of them, which he could not.

The Giant's castle was situated on a mountain, as it ought to have been, and there was also the usual courtyard before it, and the customary moat, which was full of bones! All I have to say about those bones is, they were not mutton bones. A great many details of this story must be left to the imagina-

tion of the reader; they are too harrowing to relate. A much tenderer regard for the feelings of the audience will be shown in this than in most giant stories; we will even go so far as to state in advance, that the story has a good end, thereby enabling readers to peruse it comfortably without unpleasant suspense.

The Pumpkin Giant was fonder of little boys and girls than anything else in the world; but he was somewhat fonder of little boys, and more particularly of fat little boys.

The fear and horror of this Giant extended over the whole country. Even the King on his throne was so severely afflicted with the Giant's Shakes that he had been obliged to have the throne propped, for fear it should topple over in some unusually violent fit. There was good reason why the King shook; his only daughter, the Princess Ariadne Diana, was probably the fattest princess in the whole world at that date. So fat was she that she had never walked a step in the dozen years of her life, being totally unable to progress over the earth by any method except rolling. And a really beautiful sight it was, too, to see the Princess Ariadne Diana, in her cloth-of-gold rolling-suit, faced with green velvet and edged with ermine, with her glittering crown on her head, trundling along the avenues of the royal gardens, which had been furnished with strips of rich carpeting for her express accommodation.

But gratifying as it would have been to the King, her sire,

under other circumstances, to have had such an unusually interesting daughter, it now only served to fill his heart with the greatest anxiety on her account. The Princess was never allowed to leave the palace without a body-guard of fifty knights, the very flower of the King's troops, with lances in rest, but in spite of all this precaution, the King shook.

Meanwhile amongst the ordinary people who could not procure an escort of fifty armed knights for the plump among their children,the ravages of the Pumpkin Giant were frightful. It was apprehended at one time that there would be very few fat little girls, and no fat little boys at all, left in the kingdom. And what made matters worse, at that time the Giant commenced taking a tonic to increase his appetite.

Finally the King, in desperation, issued a proclamation that he would knight any one, be he noble or common, who should cut off the head of the Pumpkin Giant. This was the King's usual method of rewarding any noble deed in his kingdom. It was a cheap method, and besides everybody like to be a knight.

When the King issued his proclamation every man in the kingdom who was not already a knight, straightway tried to contrive ways and means to kill the Pumpkin Giant. But there was one obstacle which seemed insurmountable: they were afraid, and all of them had the Giant's Shakes so badly, that they could not possibly have held a knife steady enough

to cut off the Giant's head, even if they had dared to go near enough for that purpose.

There was one man who lived not far from the terrible Giant's castle, a poor man, his only worldly wealth consisting in a large potato-field and a cottage in front of it. But he had a boy of twelve, an only son, who rivaled the Princess Ariadne Diana in point of fatness. He was unable to have a body-guard for his son; so the amount of terror which the inhabitants of that humble cottage suffered day and night was heart-rending. The poor mother had been unable to leave her bed for two years, on account of the Giant's Shakes; her husband barely got a living from the potato-field; half the time he and his wife had hardly enough to eat, as it naturally took the larger part of the potatoes to satisfy the fat little boy, their son, and their situation was truly pitiable.

The fat boy's name was Aeneas, his father's name was Patroclus, and his mother's Daphne. It was all the fashion in those days to have classical names. And as that was a fashion as easily adopted by the poor as the rich, everybody had them. They were just like Jim and Tommy and May in these days. Why, the Princess's name, Ariadne Diana, was nothing more nor less than Ann Eliza with us.

One morning Patroclus and Aeneas were out in the field digging potatoes, for new potatoes were just in the market. The Early Rose potato had not been discovered in those days; but there was another potato, perhaps equally good, which at-

tained to a similar degree of celebrity. It was called the Young Plantagenet, and reached a very large size indeed, much larger than the Early Rose does in our time.

Well, Patroclus and Aeneas had just dug perhaps a bushel of Young Plantagenet potatoes. It was slow work with them, for Patroclus had the Giant's Shakes badly that morning, and of course Aeneas was not very swift. He rolled about among the potato-hills after the manner of the Princess Ariadne Diana; but he did not present as imposing an appearance as she, in his homespun farmer's frock.

All at once the earth trembled violently. Patroclus and Aeneas looked up and saw the Pumpkin Giant coming with his mouth wide open. "Get behind me, O my darling son!" cried Patroclus.

Aeneas obeyed, but it was of no use; for you could see his cheeks each side his father's waistcoat.

Patroclus was not ordinarily a brave man, but he was brave in an emergency; and as that is the only time when there is the slightest need of bravery, it was just as well.

The Pumpkin Giant strode along faster and faster, opening his mouth wider and wider, until they could fairly hear it crack at the corners.

Then Patroclus picked up an enormous Young Plantagenet and threw it plump into the Pumpkin Giant's mouth. The Giant choked and gasped, and choked and gasped, and finally tumbled down and died.

Patroclus and Aeneas, while the Giant was choking, had run to the house and locked themselves in; then they looked out of the window; when they saw the Giant tumble down and lie quite still, they knew he must be dead. Then Daphne was immediately cured of the Giant's Shakes, and got out of bed for the first time in two years. Patroclus sharpened the carving-knife on the kitchen stove, and they all went out into the potato-field.

They cautiously approached the prostrate Giant, for fear he might be shamming, and might suddenly spring up at them and Aeneas. But no, he did not move at all; he was quite dead. And, all taking turns, they hacked off his head with the carving-knife. Then Aeneas had it to play with, which was quite appropriate, and a good instance of the sarcasm of destiny.

The King was notified of the death of the Pumpkin Giant, and was greatly rejoiced thereby. His Giant's Shakes ceased, the props were removed from the throne, and the Princess Ariadne Diana was allowed to go out without her body-guard of fifty knights, much to her delight, for she found them a great hindrance to the enjoyment of her daily outings.

It was a great cross, not to say an embrassment, when she was gleefully rolling in pursuit of a charming red and gold butterfly, to find herself suddenly stopped short by an armed knight with his lance in rest.

But the King, though his gratitude for the noble deed knew

no bounds, omitted to give the promised reward and knight Patroclus.

I hardly know how it happened—I don't think it was anything intentional. Patroclus felt rather hurt about it, and Daphne would have liked to be a lady, but Aeneas did not care in the least. He had the Giant's head to play with and that was reward enough for him. There was not a boy in the neighbourhood but envied him his possession of such a unique plaything; and when they would stand looking over the wall of the potato-field with longing eyes, and he was flying over the ground with the head, his happiness knew no bounds; and Aeneas played so much with the Giant's head that finally late in the fall it got broken and scattered all over the field.

Next spring all over Patroclus's potato-field grew running vines, and in the fall Giant's heads. There they were all over the field, hundreds of them! Then there was consernation indeed! The natural conclusion to be arrived at when the people saw the yellow Giant's heads making their appearance above the ground was, that the rest of the Giants were coming.

"There was one Pumpkin Giant before," said they; "now there will be a whole army of them. If it was dreadful then, what will it be in the future? If one Pumpkin Giant gave us the shakes so badly, what will a whole army of them do?"

But when some time had elasped and nothing more of the Giants appeared above the surface of the potato-field, and as moreover the heads had not yet displayed any sign of opening

their mouths, the people began to feel a little easier, and the general excitement subsided somewhat, although the King had ordered out Ariadne Diana's body-guard again.

Now Aeneas had been born with a propensity for putting everything into his mouth and tasting it; there was scarcely anything in his vicinity which could by any possibility be tasted, which he had not eaten a bit of. This propensity was so alarming in his babyhood, that Daphne purchased a book of antidotes; and if it had not been for her admirable good judgment in doing so, this story would probably never have been told; for no human baby could possibly have survived the heterogeneous diet which Aeneas had indulged in. There was scarcely one of the antidotes which had not been resorted to from time to time.

Aeneas had become acquainted with the peculiar flavour of almost everything in his immediate vicinity except the Giant's heads; and he naturally enough cast longing eyes at them. Night and day he wondered what a Giant's head could taste like, till finally one day when Patroclus was away he stole out into the potato-field, cut a bit out of one of the Giant's heads and ate it. He was almost afraid to, but he reflected that his mother could give him an antidote; so he ventured. It tasted very sweet and nice; he liked it so much that he cut off another piece and ate that, then another and another, until he had eaten two-thirds of a Giant's head. Then he thought it was about time for him to go in and tell his

mother and take an antidote, though he did not feel ill at all yet.

"Mother," said he, rolling slowly into the cottage, "I have eaten two-thirds of a Giant's head, and I guess you had better give me an antidote."

"O, my precious son!" cried Daphne, "how could you?" She looked in her book of antidotes, but could not find one antidote for a Giant's head.

"O Aeneas, my dear, dear son!" groaned Daphne, "there is no antidote for Giant's head! What shall we do?"

Then she sat down and wept, and Aeneas wept, too, as loud as he possibly could. And he apparently had excellent reason to; for it did not seem possible that a boy could eat two-thirds of a Giant's head and survive it without an antidote. Patroclus came home, and they told him, and he sat down and lamented with them. All day they sat weeping and watching Aeneas, expecting every moment to see him die. But he did not die; on the contrary he had never felt so well in his life.

Finally at sunset Aeneas looked up and laughed. "I am not going to die," said he; "I never felt so well; you had better stop crying. And I am going out to get some more of that Giant's head; I am hungry."

"Don't, don't!" cried his father and mother; but he went; for he generally took his own way, very like most only sons. He came back with a whole Giant's head in his arms.

"See here, father and mother," cried he; "we'll all have some of this; it evidently is not poison, and it is good—a great deal better than potatoes!"

Patroclus and Daphne hesitated, but they were hungry, too. Since the crop of Giant's heads had sprung up in their field instead of potatoes, they had been hungry most of the time; so they tasted.

"It is good," said Daphne; "but I think it would be better cooked." So she put some in a kettle of water over the fire, and let it boil awhile; then she dished it up, and they all ate it. It was delicious. It tasted more like stewed pumpkin than anything else; in fact it was stewed pumpkin.

Daphne was inventive; and something of a genuis; and next day she concocted another dish out of the Giant's heads. She boiled them, and sifted them, and mixed them with eggs and sugar and milk and spice; then she lined some plates with puff paste, filled them with the mixture, and set them in the oven to bake.

The result was unparalleled; nothing half so exquisite had ever been tasted. They were all in ecstasies, Aeneas in particular. They gathered all the Giant's heads and stored them in the cellar. Daphne baked pies of them every day, and nothing could surpass the felicity of the whole family.

One morning the King had been out hunting, and happened to ride by the cottage of Patroclus with a train of his knights. Daphne was baking pies as usual, and the kitchen door and

window were both open, for the room was so warm; so the delicious odour of the pies perfumed the whole air about the cottage.

"What is it smells so utterly lovely?" exclaimed the King, sniffing in a rapture.

He sent his page in to see.

"The housewife is baking Giant's head pies," said the page, returning.

"What?" thundered the King. "Bring out one to me!"

So the page brought out a pie to him, and after all his knights had tasted to be sure it was not poison, and the King had watched them sharply for a few moments to be sure they were not killed, he tasted too.

Then he beamed. It was a new sensation, and a new sensation is a great boon to a king.

"I never tasted anything so altogether superfine, so utterly magnificent in my life," cried the King; "stewed peacocks' tongues from the Baltic are not to be compared with it! Call out the housewife immediately!"

So Daphne came out trembling, and Patroclus and Aeneas also.

"What a charming lad!" exclaimed the King, as his glance fell upon Aeneas. "Now tell me about these wonderful pies, and I will reward you as becomes a monarch!"

Then Patroclus fell on his knees and related the whole history of the Giant's head pies from the beginning.

The King actually blushed. "And I forgot to knight you, oh, noble and brave man, and to make a lady of your admirable wife!"

Then the King leaned gracefully down from his saddle, and struck Patroclus with his jeweled sword and knighted him on the spot.

The whole family went to live at the royal palace. The roses in the royal gardens were uprooted, and Giant's heads (or pumpkins, as they came to be called) were sown in their stead; all the royal parks also were turned into pumpkinfields.

Patroclus was in constant attendance on the King, and used to stand all day in his ante-chamber. Daphne had a position of great responsibility, for she superintended the baking of the pumpkin pies, and Aeneas finally married the Princess Ariadne Diana.

They were wedded in great state by fifty archbishops; and all the newspapers united in stating that they were the most charming and well-matched young couple that had ever been united in the kingdom.

The stone entrance of the Pumpkin Giant's Castle was securely fastened, and upon it was engraved an inscription composed by the first poet in the kingdom, for which the King made him laureate, and gave him the liberal pension of fifty pumpkin pies per year.

The following is the inscription in full:

"Here dwelt the Pumpkin Giant once,
He's dead the nation doth rejoice,
For, while he was alive, he lived
By e——g dear, fat, little boys."

The inscription is said to remain to this day; if you were to go there you would probably see it.

THE GAY LITTLE KING

So gay it looked, that young maple tree standing in the centre of the pasture with rows and rows of dark cedars and hemlocks growing all around it! They towered above the little maple and yet seemed to bow before it, as with their size and strength they shielded it from the wind which tossed their branches. It was covered, this small tree, with leaves of flaming crimson and gold which danced and fluttered merrily in the sunshine.

"Is it after all only a maple tree?" thought the little lad Jamie, who lay upon the ground in the old pasture watching. Ever since the frost in a single night had painted the leaves with splendour, that young tree had been a real comrade to the cripple boy. Jamie had hurt his back the year before, and this summer, while the other boys climbed mountains and swam streams, Jamie could only hobble upon his crutches as far as the pasture. There he lay for hours upon the grass watching the clouds drift across the sky and wishing he were a cloud or a bird, so he could fly also. The days seemed very long, and to make them pass more quickly Jamie made up stories about the mountains in the distance, the stream which

rippled at the foot of the pasture and the dark evergreen trees which surrounded that flaming maple. "They are dull old courtiers, and he is a gay little king in his coronation robes," thought the boy; and then—he sat up in astonishment and rubbed his eyes. Was he dreaming? No, it was all real, the young maple was gone and in its place was a little king! A crown of gleaming jewels was upon his head, he was dressed in robes of flaming crimson, and over all was flung a mantle of woven gold. And the dark evergreens, where were they? There was no sign of them, and around the king stood a throng of grave and solemn courtiers dressed in green velvet, all gazing frowningly at the King. He was stamping his foot, Jamie heard the stamp, and then he heard the King cry in a clear, boyish voice, "I won't be a King! I won't sit upon a throne all day long and make laws and punish people and be bowed down to; I want to be a little boy and have fun, I do!"

At that moment a gust of wind blew the King's mantle from his shoulders; it looked like a handful of golden leaves flying through the air, and the King himself—or was it only a branch of scarlet leaves?—no, it was the little King who came scampering over the grass toward Jamie. "Come," he said gleefully, "we are going to run away, you and I. We're going to have the merriest day of our whole lives!"

"But my crutches," sighed Jamie. "See, I can't run."

"Can't you?" whispered the little King gently. "Close your eyes and keep tight hold of my hand."

As Jamie shut his eyes he felt something very soft, like a bit of thistle down against his cheek, and then as light as that same thistle he felt himself rising from the ground, drifting, floating, flying, up, up—— "Now open your eyes," said the little King's laughing voice. Jamie obeyed, and for a moment he was puzzled. Was he a King, too, he wondered, for his clothes were of crimson velvet like the lad's beside him, or were they but leaves fluttering through the air?

"Never mind what you are," cried the King reading his look of bewilderment. "We can all be lots more things than we dream of until the Spirit of Autumn takes hold of us. The folks below think us only leaves, but we know better, and now, where shall we go? This is my last gorgeous day, for tonight Autumn flies away from the cold breath of Winter. Let's fly to the spot you wish to see more than anything else in the world."

"Flying like this is such fun that I don't care where we go," answered Jamie, then suddenly both leaves—but let us say boys—stopped drifting and gazed in wonder at the sight before them. They were in the sunshine, but a shower was falling in the distance and opposite them, across the sky, stretched a perfect rainbow.

"Did you ever hear of the pot of gold at the rainbow's foot?" asked Jamie excitedly. "Let's go there now and find it!"

"All right," answered the little King, "let's go there; and

if we don't find the pot of gold we may find something still more wonderful."

Through the air they flew toward the rainbow, whose colours were paling a little in the center, but growing more and more glorious at the end.

"Shut your eyes again and hold my hand tight," said the King. "I must fill your eyes with mist or you would be blinded by the sight you are going to see. No boy has ever seen it before except in dreams."

For a moment Jamie shivered, they seemed to be passing through a thick fog, and then—"Open your eyes," cried the King. Jamie looked——

Picture to yourself a great golden hall filled with streams of colours, each as radiant as the sunshine, and yet, seen through spectacles of mist, so soft they could not dazzle your eyes. Each great sheath of colour was moving, shifting and weaving itself in and out among the others like the figure of a dancer, so quickly that it was almost impossible to catch it. And yet that was just what hundreds of gay little fairies with butterfly wings and scarfs of thistle down were trying to do. Each one carried a golden pot, and as they caught one colour after another their captives rushed away, leaving a bit of colour in the fairy's hand. Hastily dropping that bit into his golden pot with a merry, tinkling laugh, the fairy was off again after another dancing, gleaming bit of rainbow.

"So there are the pots of gold," cried Jamie. "But what do the fairies do with the rainbow's colours?"

Just then a very merry sprite came tearing past, his pot brimming over with glowing crimson. "My colour is the favourite just now," he cried. "I've one billion trees to paint and all that's left over goes to the cardinal flowers." "Mine is just as popular," sang out another fairy, his pot overflowing with gold. "There are millions of goldenrods for me to colour as well as the trees!" "And autumn loves mine too," chanted a delicate little sprite whose pot was filled with violet. "Think of all the asters without which your golden-rods would be very tiresome." "And mine," rippled another, his pot filled with blue like the sea. "Autumn always wants mine! The gentians are rare because one blossom takes more colour than a thousand of spring's forget-me-nots."

Just then a flaming orange stream rushed past, and Jamie and the little king made one grab at it.

"Thieves! Robbers!" cried the colours in a whirl of fury. In a second they were all dancing madly before the eyes of the terrified boys. Then there was a crash as of thunder and the lads found themselves lying upon the ground, wet, thick, grey mist all about them. The glorious dance at the rainbow's foot had vanished.

"I suppose we deserved that," sighed Jamie, "but I did want a pocketful of colour stuff to show the boys."

"Never mind, let's fly out of this mist and have more fun!"

cried the little King. Up they floated into the sunshine and they found that the winds had been busy while they were gone. Almost every tree stood dark and bare—the air was full of brilliant, whispering leaves. "Winter is surely coming soon," said the little King. "Look at the spot below us where I grew." Beneath them, in the centre of the pasture, stood the maple tree, only one crimson leaf still fluttering from its branches.

"When that leaf is gone, I'll have to say good-night for many months," said the King. "Come, before that happens we'll go to the Cavern of the Winds and see how Autumn plays upon them."

This time they flew upward, and now it was so cold that Jamie drew his scarlet robes close about him. Through the first thin clouds they flew; then right into a great cloud, looking like an enormous castle, they floated. It was one huge hall, so vast that Jamie couldn't see the other end, but he could hear, far, far away beyond great arches, the rumbling of a mighty organ. Crashing and thunderous it sounded until the vast hall shook and echoed with the sound. "That is Autumn playing upon the organ of the winds," said the little King; and although he shouted in Jamie's ear it sounded like a whisper above the music. "When she touches the keys the winds fill the pipes and go roaring off to carry away the leaves below," he explained. "But listen—she knows the

leaves have almost all fallen and now she is singing her good-night to them."

The crashing had ceased, and through the great hall echoed a slumber song, as sweet as a thrush's note at twilight, as tender as a wooddove's call.

Jamie closed his eyes and thought of lapping waves, and sunsets, the new moon rising, and the first stars blossoming in the sky.

Did he sleep there in the Winds' Cavern with the Spirit of Autumn singing good-night to her flaming world? He never knew. When he opened his eyes he found himself standing upon the doorstep of his own home! He was drawing something soft and white about him to keep out the cold and he heard a whispered, "Good-night, Comrade, until next Autumn," and a flutter as of leaves flying through the air, then the house door opened and as he stood with the light of the blazing fire falling upon him he heard his mother's voice:

"Why, Jamie, you're covered with snow! And, my boy, where are your crutches?"

Into the house he ran, right into his mother's outstretched arms, although his crutches were still lying out on the pasture, buried beneath the snow! And Jamie was well! Was it a gift from the Spirit of Autumn to a little lad? Just another of her precious gifts given with her flaming leaves, her wind's music, her glorious flowers. Has she not a gift for you, too, among all these? Open your eyes and your ears and find your heart's desire!

JOHNNY APPLESEED

ONCE there was a man who was very, very poor. He had been a farmer, and no one raised such fine crops as he did. By and by, in some way, he lost his farm, and was left all alone.

He had always wanted to do some grand thing, something that would make many people happy, but what could he do? He had no money. All he had was a small boat.

As he trudged along one day, he saw some old sacks lying under a tree. As he looked at them he had a splendid thought, —a thought that seemed to have wings, and came flying from far away. Oh, it was a beautiful thought, and seemed to be singing a little song in his heart, as he picked up the sacks, and placed them in his boat, jumped in himself, and floated away.

As he rowed down the stream, the man watched the shore with keen eyes. When he saw an apple orchard he rowed to land, tied his boat, hastened to the homes near the orchards, and asked for work.

He cut wood, carried water, and did all sorts of odd chores.

In payment for this work he asked for food, and what else do you suppose?

The people were so surprised at his request that they could hardly believe him. He asked that he might have the seeds from the apples on the ground under the trees—only the seeds.

Of course they gladly gave him such a simple thing, and as he cut the fruit the neighbour children swarmed about him.

From one place to another he went, always adding to his store of seeds.

Some generous farmers gave him also cuttings of peach, pear, and plum trees, and of grape vines.

Day after day, day after day, he cut up the fruit, while the children sat at his feet and listened to thrilling tales of what he had seen in his travels. He told about the Indians with their gay blankets and feathers; and of their camps where they lived in the forests; of their dances and war paint, their many-coloured beaded necklaces and jingling silver chains and bracelets; of their beady-eyed babies strapped to boards; of the wolves which came out at night to watch him as he sat by his fire; of the beautiful deer that ran across his patch.

He sang funny songs for the children, and taught them all sorts of games.

When it came time to go on, they begged him to stay. Never before had they had been so amused, but on he went;

and when his bags were full, and he had a goodly store of food, he started on to carry out the splendid thought. Oh, it was a grand thing he was going to do.

The little boat went on and on, till houses were no more to be seen. Splendid forests lined the banks here and there. Then he paused, for this was what he was seeking—a place where no one lived.

He landed and went about with a bag of seeds, and when he reached an open place in a forest, he planted seeds and cuttings of the trees and vines; then he wove a brush fence about them to keep the deer away, hastened back to his boat, and drifted on.

In many, many places he landed and planted seeds, and all the orchards of the Ohio and Mississippi Valley we owe to this man.

Years after when settlers came looking for a place to live, they chose these spots where, to their great surprise, they found all sorts of trees loaded with fruit.

This man's name was John Chapman, but he was nicknamed Johnny Appleseed.

ORIGIN OF INDIAN CORN

ONCE upon a time an Indian chief sat alone in his wigwam thinking about the needs of his tribe. For more than a year food had been very scarce, and they were suffering from a scanty fare of roots, herbs, and berries. Many of the people had come to him in their misery.

"We ask you to help us, brave chief," they cried. "Will you not entreat the Great Spirit to send us some of the food from the Happy Hunting Grounds where it is so plentiful? See how weak and thin our young braves are. Help us or we shall die."

"I'll go into the depths of the forest," said the chief. "There I'll live until the Great Spirit tells me how to relieve the misery of my people."

He left his wigwam and walked far into the forest, where he waited for several days before the Great Spirit spoke these words to him:

"In the moon of rains take thy family and go to the stretch of land which joins this forest. Wait there until I send thee a message."

The chief went back to the Indian village, and told what he had heard from the Great Spirit. And in the Moon of Rains he called together his honoured wife, his fleet-footed

sons, and his graceful daughter, and said, "Follow me to the stretch of land beyond the forest."

When they reached the great plain, they stood in a group waiting for a message from the Great Spirit. For three suns they stood patiently without once changing their positions.

The Indians of the tribe grew anxious to know what had happened to their chief and his family, and some of them slipped through the wood to the plain where they knew he had been directed to go. There they saw the group of figures standing with their hands uplifted, and their eyes closed. The Indians were filled with awe.

"The Great Spirit is talking to them," they whispered, as they went back to their wigwams.

In a few days they returned to the plain. A marvelous sight met their eyes. Instead of the chief and his family standing like images of sleep, the Indians saw wonderful green plants, tall and straight, with broad, flat leaves; and in place of uplifted hands they beheld ears of corn with silken fringe.

"The Great Spirit has called our chief and his family to the 'Happy Hunting Grounds,'" they said, "and has sent us this food as a symbol of their sacrifice."

They saved some of the kernels and planted them in the fields, and each year when they reaped a golden harvest they remembered the brave chief whose thoughtful care brought them the rich blessing of the Indian corn.

GRANDFATHER'S WILLOW WHISTLE

When grandfather was a little boy, he lived in a red farm-house on a country road.

One day his father bought a large flock of sheep from a neighbour. At night they stayed in the barn. In the day time they were driven to the pasture where they cropped the grass all day long. Every Saturday morning and during vacation time John, for that was grandfather's name, went with the flock to the pasture and took care of the sheep and lambs. At night he drove them safely to the shelter in the barn. Here is a story about what happened one night to John.

Every spring John's father had made him a willow whistle which he used in taking care of the sheep. This spring when John asked his father to make him a very loud whistle, his father asked, "Why don't you make your own whistle, John? You have a good jack-knife."

At first John thought that he couldn't make a whistle. It is not an easy thing to do. It must be straight and smooth and hollow and notched in just the right place. However, John made up his mind to try. He cut several before he made one that suited him. At last he had a fine one, straight, smooth,

and hollow and notched in just the right place. It made a noise that sounded like the whistle of a steam engine. All summer he carried it in his pocket. When fall came and the cornfields were brown and yellow, he still had his whistle.

One evening something happened which showed that the lad was a brave shepherd. You know that the autumn sun, which sometimes looks like a great orange ball, sets a little earlier every evening. On the night I am going to tell you about, it began to go down earlier than usual. The pasture was covered with long grey shadows made by the trees around the edge of the tall weeds. The way home looked dark and the wind came whistling along.

John gathered the sheep together as well as he could. Then he started to drive them toward the open pasture bars. As he did so he saw two bright eyes gleaming before him in the dusk of the road.

"There's Towser coming to meet me," thought John. "Come, Towser, good old Towser," he called.

But instead of coming closer the eyes grew as bright as balls of fire. Then they moved backward. Behind the two bright eyes shone something that looked like pairs of little stars. They grew brighter all the time.

The bright eyes belonged to a wolf and behind him were other wolves, his followers. They were waiting for the sheep, but they wanted most of all the lambs. Not for a long time had wolves been seen in that neighbourhood. And there was

John, just a little boy, and all alone with his sheep. He was never before so frightened.

Back of him was the pasture growing darker all the time. It was so full of rocks and so wide that there was no place to hide in. The little red farm house with its lights and the big barn were a long way down the road, and between home and John was a pack of wolves.

He could not think what to do. The sheep were giving frightened bleats now, and crowding together and pushing each other. The wolves were coming closer all the time.

John put his hands up to his face in fear. As he did so he touched his pocket. The willow whistle was in it and he felt it. Like a brave little boy that he was, he pulled out the whistle, put it to his lips, and blew it as hard and as long as he could.

At the first sound the wolves stopped. Then they moved back a little. It surprised them because they had never heard such a sound before. John blew the whistle again, and this time the wolves went back from the pasture bars. It made John feel braver every minute to see that he was frightening the pack; so he kept on blowing the whistle. He never could say how long he blew it, but he grew braver all the time. A short distance up the road he saw the wolves huddled together, but they did not come any closer. Suddenly John heard footsteps coming down the road.

It was John's father and the hired man. They had heard the whistle and had come to help the lad and the sheep.

They drove the wolves back to the hills from which they had come, and then with the sheep safe and sound they all went home.

"That was a useful willow whistle, John," said his father.

"Yes," John said, "and I made it myself."

WHY THE AUTUMN LEAVES ARE RED

LONG, long ago no one but animals lived upon the earth and sometimes they would hold great Councils. The Bear would be there,—the Bear, with his sharp claws, and his shiny coat, and his big, big growl; and the Deer, who was so proud of his antlers, for they came out of his head like trees; and all the animals, and all the birds would be present at the great Council. Little Turtle would go there, too. She was so small that she did not like to speak to anyone. But, she often wished:

"Oh, if *only* I could do some good deed! What *could* such a little creature as I do? Anyway," she thought, "I'll be on the watch,—and it may be that some time there will be a chance for me to do *something* for my people."

Little Turtle never forgot about that good deed she had planned to perform. One day the opportunity came to her. She was at the Council, and the animals were saying:

"It is so dark here, we have only the Snowlight to see by. It is gloomy, too. Couldn't we make a light and place it up in Skyland?" they asked.

Little Turtle said: "Please let me go up to Skyland. I am sure that I can make a light shine up there."

They said that she might go, and they called Dark Cloud to carry Little Turtle there. Dark Cloud came.

Little Turtle saw that Thunder and Lightning were in Dark Cloud; and when she reached Skyland, she made the Sun from Lightning, and placed him in the Sky.

The Sun could not move, because he had no life, and all the world underneath was too hot to live upon.

"What shall we do?" the animals asked one another. Some one said:

"We must give the Sun life and spirit, and then he will move about in the sky."

So they gave him life and spirit, and he moved about in the sky. Mud Turtle dug a hole through the earth for the Sun to travel through. Little Turtle made a wife for him out of some of the Lightning from Dark Cloud. She was the Moon. Their little children were the stars that played all over Skyland.

All this time, Little Turtle was taking care of Skyland. The animals below called her, She Who Takes Care of Skyland. And she was very happy, because she was doing her *good deed.*

Some of the animals became jealous of Little Turtle,—especially the Deer, who was so proud of his antlers. One day, Deer said to Rainbow:

"Rainbow, please take me up to Skyland where Little Turtle lives."

Rainbow did not know whether it would be quite right to take Deer up to Little Turtle's house, but he said:

"In the winter, when I rest upon the big mountain by the lake, then I will take you."

This made the Deer glad. He did not tell anyone about the promise of Rainbow. All winter long, he waited and watched near the big mountain for Rainbow to come; but Rainbow did not come to him. In the spring, one day, Deer saw Rainbow beside the lake.

"Rainbow," he asked, "why did you not keep your promise to me?" Rainbow made him another promise.

"Come to me by the lake, when you see me in the thick fog," he said.

The Deer kept this promise a secret, too; because he hoped to go to Skyland alone. Day after day, he waited beside the lake. One day, when the thick fog was rising from the lake,—Deer saw the beautiful Rainbow.

Rainbow made an arch from the lake to the big mountain. Then a shining light fell about the Deer, and he saw a straight path shining with all the colours of the Rainbow. It led through a great forest.

"Follow the beautiful path through the great forest," Rainbow said.

The Deer entered the shining pathway, and it led him straight to the house of Little Turtle in Skyland. And the Deer went about Skyland everywhere.

When the great Council met, Deer was not there. "The Deer is not come to the Council, where is the Deer?" they asked.

Hawk flew about the air everywhere, and could not find Deer in the air. Wolf searched the deep woods, and could not find Deer in the forests.

When Dark Cloud brought Little Turtle to the Council, Little Turtle told them how Rainbow had made a path for Deer to climb to Skyland. "There it is now," said Little Turtle.

The animals looked over the lake, and they saw, there, the beautiful pathway. They had never seen it before.

"Why did not Deer wait for us? All of us should have gone to Skyland together," they said.

Now, Brown Bear determined to follow that pathway the very next time he should see it.

One day when he was alone, near the lake, he saw the shining path that led through the great forest. Soon he found himself in Skyland. The first person he met was the Deer.

"Why did you leave us? Why did you go to the land of Little Turtle without us? Why did you not wait for us?" he asked the Deer.

The Deer shook his antlers angrily. "What right have *you* to question me? No one but the Wolf may question why I came. I will kill you for your impertinence."

The Deer arched his neck; he poised his antlered head; his eyes blazed with fury.

The Bear was not afraid. He stood up; his claws were sharp and strong; his hoarse growls sounded all over Skyland.

The battle of the Deer and the Bear shook Skyland. The animals looked up from the earth.

"Who will go? Who will go to Skyland and forbid the Deer to fight?"

"I will go," said the Wolf. "I can run faster than anyone." So Wolf ran along the shining pathway, and in a little while he had reached the place of the battle. Wolf made Deer stop fighting. Deer's antlers were covered with blood, and when he shook them, great drops fell down, down through the air, and splashed against all the leaves of the forest. And the leaves became a beautiful red.

So, in the autumn, when you see the leaves turning red, you may know that it is because in the long ago, the Deer and the Bear fought a great battle in Skyland, in the land of Little Turtle who was doing her good deed.

JACK FROST

THE door was shut as doors should be
  Before you went to bed last night;
Yet Jack Frost has got in, you see,
  And left your windows silver white.

He must have waited till you slept,
  And not a single word he spoke,
But penciled o'er the panes and crept
  Away before you woke.

And now you cannot see the trees
  Nor fields that stretch beyond the lane
But there are fairer things than these
  His fingers traced on every pane.

Rocks and castles towering high;
  Hills and dales and streams and fields,
And knights in armour riding by,
  With nodding plumes and shining shields.

And here are little boats, and there
  Big ships with sails spread to the breeze,
And yonder, palm trees waving fair
  And islands set in silver seas.

And butterflies with gauzy wings;
  And herds of cows and flocks of sheep;
And fruit and flowers and all the things
  You see when you are sound asleep.

For creeping softly underneath
  The door when all the lights are out,
Jack Frost takes every breath you breathe
  And knows the things you think about.

He paints them on the window pane
  In fairy lines with frozen steam;
And when you wake you see again
  The lovely things you saw in dream.

THE ICE KING

(Indian Legend)

Once upon a time there was an Indian village built on the bank of a wide river. During the spring, summer, and autumn the people were very happy. There was plenty of fuel and game in the deep woods; the river afforded excellent fish. But the Indians dreaded the months when the Ice King reigned.

One winter the weather was terribly cold and the people suffered severely. The Ice King called forth the keen wind from the northern sky, and piled the snowdrifts so high in the forests that it was most difficult to supply the wigwams with game. He covered the river with ice so thick that the Indians feared it would never melt.

"When will the Ice King leave us?" they asked one another. "We shall all perish if he continues his cruel reign."

At last signs of spring encouraged the stricken people. The great snowdrifts in the forests disappeared and the ice on the river broke into large pieces. All of these floated downstream except one huge cake which lodged on the bank very near the village. And when the Indians saw that the

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spring sunshine did not melt this great mass of ice, they were puzzled and anxious.

"It is the roof of the Ice King's lodge," they said. "We shall never enjoy warm weather while he dwells near us. Have we no brave who is willing to do battle with this winter tyrant?"

At last, a courageous young hunter armed himself with a huge club and went forth to see if he could shatter the glittering frozen mass and rid the village of the giant who dwelt beneath it. With all his strength he struck the ice roof blow upon blow, crying out, "Begone, O cruel Ice King! Your time is past! Begone!"

Finally, there was a deafening noise like the crashing of forest trees when the lightning strikes, and the huge ice cake split into several pieces.

"Begone!" cried the young brave, as he struggled with each great lump of ice until he pushed it from the bank and tumbled it into the river below.

And when the mighty task was finished, the white figure of the Ice King stood before the Indian brave.

"You have ruined my lodge," said the giant.

"The winter season is past," answered the brave. "Begone!"

"After several moons I shall return to stay," threatened the Ice King. Then he stalked away toward the North.

The people were very happy when they knew that the

young brave had conquered the giant; but their joy was somewhat dampened when they heard about the threatened return of the Ice King.

"I shall prepare for his return and do battle with him again," declared the Indian conqueror.

This promise comforted the people somewhat, but still they thought of the coming winter with dread.

During the autumn the hunter built near the river a strong wigwam and stored therein abundant fuel and dried game. He filled many bags made of skin, with oil which he procured from the animals he killed. Also, he was well supplied with fur rugs, blankets, and warm clothes.

At last the winter season came. The cold north wind blew unceasingly, the snow piled high around the wigwams; ice several feet thick covered the river.

"The Ice King has come," said the Indians. "If he keeps his threat to stay among us, we shall surely perish."

One bitter cold day the young Indian who had prepared well for the severe weather sat in his wigwam near a blazing fire. Suddenly, a strong gust of wind tore aside the bear skin which protected the doorway and into the lodge stalked the Ice King. His freezing breath filled the place and dampened the fire. He took a seat opposite the Indian brave who said, "Welcome, Ice King."

"I've come to stay," answered the giant.

The Indian shivered with cold at the sudden change of

temperature in his wigwam, but he rose and brought more logs to the fire. Also, he opened one of his bags of oil and poured the contents on the great pieces of wood. The flames soon caught the oil-soaked logs and a roaring fire crackled and blazed in the wigwam. More and more fuel the young brave piled on his fire until finally the frosty cold air was changed to summer heat.

The Ice King shifted his seat away from the glowing fire. Farther and farther away he pushed until he sat with his back against the wall of the wigwam. As he moved he seemed to grow smaller and weaker. The icy feathers of his head-gear drooped about his forehead and great drops of sweat covered his face. But still the Indian brave piled fuel on the blazing fire.

"Spare me, O hunter," cried the Ice King.

But to the words of the giant the young Indian was deaf. He opened another bag of oil and poured it on the logs.

"Have mercy, I beg you!" pleaded the Ice King. He rose and staggered toward the door.

"You have conquered me," he said in a weak voice. "I will depart. Twice you have won a victory over me. I give up my hope of reigning continually among your people. My season shall last during three moons, only."

He staggered out of the wigwam and stalked wearily away. Since that day the giant Ice King has not tried to reign throughout the year.

SHELTERING WINGS

It was intensely cold. Heavy sleds creaked as they scraped over the jeweled sounding board of dry, unyielding snow; the signs above shop doors shrieked and groaned as they swung helplessly to and fro; and the clear, keen air seemed frozen into sharp little crystalline needles that stabbed every living thing that must be out in it. The streets were almost forsaken in mid-afternoon. Business men hurried from shelter to shelter; every dog remained at home; not a bird was to be seen or heard. The sparrows had been forced to hide themselves in crevices and holes; the doves found protected corners and huddled together as best they could; many birds were frozen to death.

A dozen or more doves were gathered close under the cornice of the piazza of a certain house, trying with little success to keep warm. Some small sparrows, disturbed and driven from the cozy place they had chosen, saw the doves and came flying across the piazza.

"Dear doves," chirped the sparrows, "won't you let us nestle near you? Your bodies look so large and warm."

"But your coats are frosted with cold. We cannot let

you come near us, for we are almost frozen now," murmured the doves sadly.

"But we are perishing."

"So are we."

"It looks so warm near your broad wings, gentle doves. Oh, let us come! We are so little, and so very, very cold!"

"Come," cooed a dove at last; and a trembling little sparrow fluttered close and nestled under the broad white wing.

"Come," cooed another dove; and another little sparrow found comfort.

"Come! Come!" echoed another warm-hearted bird, and another, until at last more than half the doves were sheltering small, shivering sparrows beneath their own half-frozen wings.

"My sisters, you are very foolish," said the other doves. "You mean well, but why do you risk your own beautiful lives to give life to worthless sparrows?"

"Ah! they were so small, and so very, very cold," murmured the doves. "Many of us will perish this cruel night; while we have life let us share its meager warmth with those in bitter need."

Colder and colder grew the day. The sun went down behind the clouds suffused with soft and radiant beauty, but more fiercely and relentlessly swept the wind around the house where the doves and sparrows waited for death.

An hour after sunset a man came up to the house and

strode across the piazza. As the door of the house closed heavily behind him, a little child watching from the window saw something, jarred from the cornice, fall heavily to the piazza floor.

"Oh, papa," she cried in surprise, "a poor frozen dove has fallen on our porch!"

When he stepped out to pick up the fallen dove, the father saw the others under the cornice. They were no longer able to move or to utter a cry, so he brought them in and placed them in a room where they might slowly revive. Soon more than half of the doves could coo gratefully, and raise their stiffened wings. Then out from beneath the wing of each revived dove fluttered a living sparrow.

"Look, papa!" cried the child. "Each dove that has come to life was holding a poor little sparrow close to her heart."

They gently raised the wings of the doves that could not be revived. Not one had a sparrow beneath it.

Colder and fiercer swept the wind without, cutting and more piercing grew the frozen crystalline needles of air, but each dove that had sheltered a frost-coated sparrow beneath her own shivering wings lived to rejoice in the glowing gladsome sunshine of the days to come.

THE SNOWBALL THAT DIDN'T MELT

"Biff
Flick!
Swat!
Smack!
Biff, biff!
Flick, flick!
Swat, swat!
Smack, smack!"

It was a fine day in midwinter. The sun was just warm and bright enough to make the snow pack easily. The boys in the neighbourhood were having the liveliest kind of a snowball fight. So that is why there was this—

"Biff!
Flick!
Swat!
Smack!

And this—

Biff, biff!
Flick, flick!
Swat, swat!
Smack, smack!"

Everything ends some time. So this snowball fight did. One side or the other won,—I have forgotten which. The boys at the little brown-shingled house, where the fight took place, became very busy making balls for the next day's bat-

tle. You could hear the "pat—pat, pat—pat," as they rounded and packed the snowballs in their cold, red hands.

When they became quite satisfied that they had enough on hand for a lively battle they piled the balls up in a neat pyramid just under the edge of the veranda and went off to look for something new to do.

Then the snowballs fell to talking,—*if it is true* that snowballs talk.

"I wonder what they are going to do with us," said the top one. "I know what I'd *like* to do. I'd like to hit the nose of that rough, freckle-faced boy who hit the nose of the boy who made me."

"I know what I'd like," said the second. "I'd like to go right through the window of Old Grampy's house. Wouldn't he sputter!"

"Oh! What's the fun in teasing a poor old man?" said another. "I'll tell you what *I'd* like. *I'd* like to hit the minister right in the middle of the back and see what he would do."

"Hit the minister in the back!" said a lively-looking chap down in the middle of the pile. "Be a sport! I'd like to knock the policeman's hat off and see him chase the boy that threw me. That would be fun."

It was, you see, a very bold and mischievous lot of balls, if one may judge from their big talk. And so it was probably well for the peace of the neighbourhood that the evening had scarcely fallen when, through a sudden change in the weather,

snow, too, began to fall. All night long the snow fell, thicker and faster, thicker and faster. The wind rose and piled it in stacks. The house was banked to the windows, the veranda was heaped up high. The snowballs were buried deep,—so deep that the boys forgot them. It was spring before the thick covering of snow was melted enough so that they could see the light of day.

It was a long time after this, when there came a day which meant much for at least one of that heap of snowballs.

The sun was bright and hot; the grass was beginning to show green. The snow had all gone except in a few places on the cold side of the houses and under veranda edges. The snowballs were still piled neatly in the pyramid but they looked as if they might tumble down almost any minute. Although it was cool in their shady spot, every one of them was perspiring and several of them looked thin and pale. I fancy they had felt the heat, for all their lives they had been accustomed to a cooler climate.

As they were busy mopping their brows and sighing for cooler weather they heard a sound, between a sigh and a faint moan. They heard it again and again. It was above their heads, out on the lawn, and not far away. It seemed to be in or around a shrub or bush, with a tall slender stem and a branching top. "What's that?" asked several of the balls at once.

They stopped talking, and sighing, and listened. And as

they did so, they could hear words very distinctly, though they were not nearly so loud as a whisper.

"Snowball, Snowball, come up here!
My head is hot, my throat feels queer:
I'm going to faint, I surely fear.
Won't some cool snowball come up here?"

"Who are you?" asked Snowball Number One, who sat at the tip top of the pile. "Where are you and what is your name?"

"I'm Life-of-the-Bush,
In the bush I dwell;
I know not my name,
And so I can't tell."

"I can't see you," said Number One, as he looked intently up at the branches.

"You can't?" said the Bush,
"Then you must be blind.
I'm right up here,—
But never mind."

The voice trailed off weakly; then they heard it again:

"I'm going to faint, I really fear.
Won't some kind snowball come up here?"

"But you are up so high. How can one get there? We have neither a ladder nor wings and we do not know how to climb." Number One did most of the talking, he was nearest the bush.

"I'll tell you how," said Life-of-the-Bush, stopping

his rhyme and talking plainly and simply and sensibly. "Just roll down the slope on the lawn to the foot of this bush. Make yourself as small as small can be, creep down into the ground, and take an elevator, which is always running, and you will come directly up to me." The talking ceased, and the snowballs began to look at one another rather uneasily.

"I can't go," said Number Two, who was in the second row from the top. "I always tan terribly in the sun. It's a long way down to the foot of the bush, and I should be brown as a berry before I got half way."

"I can't go, either," said Number Three, by his side. "I don't tan, but I freckle, and freckles look dreadful on my fair complexion."

"I'm sorry I can't go," said Number Four, from his place in the corner of the third row. "But I feel the heat terribly. My clothes are all sticking to me now."

"It's simply out of the question for me," said a big fat snowball down near the ground. "I know I'd melt before I got there. There isn't much left of me now."

Number One was one of the fairest snowballs of the bunch, but he was not afraid of freckles or tan. He was also one of the smallest of the lot. He looked down to the foot of the bush. It seemed a long way. The sun was certainly burning hot. He was not at all sure that he would live long enough in that sun to reach the bush. But some one should keep Life-of-the-Bush from fainting and he would try.

He turned a quick somersault off the pile down to the ground.

At just that moment something disturbed the whole pile and every ball in it tumbled down and out into the sun.

As soon as Number One touched the ground, he began to roll over, and over, and over, as fast as ever he could. It didn't take him more than a minute to reach the foot of the bush. He remembered what Life-of-the-Bush had said, made himself just as small as small could be, crept down into the ground close to the stem and took the elevator, which seemed to be running all the time.

It took quite a while to go up, but finally the elevator paused just long enough for him to get out. He found himself in a cool, rambling house, that seemed to be almost all long, narrow halls. They ran this way and that way and every—which—way. At one end of each hall, where the buds were opening, there were windows with green shades. Everything was very clean and sweet. Right in the middle of the house he found Life-of-the-Bush. He gave her a drink of water, which he had carried in his water-proof pocket and not only kept her from fainting but made her as lively and well and happy as ever.

Life-of-the-Bush thanked the snowball a thousand times and gave him the freedom of her beautiful house.

"Now that you are here," she said, "perhaps you will stay a while and help me build my house a little bigger. I

must build leaves and buds and branches and bark. I need your help."

The snowball stayed and helped. He found it very exciting work. He worked all day and all night, ran here and there, and never stopped for meals. He packed buds and unfolded them; he pushed out the leaves and built out the ends of branches; he made bark, pressed it till it was hard and coloured it grey.

Day after day he worked at his tasks as if they gave him the greatest joy in the world. But now and then Life-of-the-Bush saw him gazing out of the window, as if he were a bit homesick, to get out of doors again.

"Stay with me a little longer," she said, "to help me build my blossoms, and then I will send you out of doors on a beautiful errand to stay as long as your heart desires."

So Snowball stayed and helped Life-of-the-Bush build her blossoms. Basket after basket of white stuff, as white as snowflakes but ever so much smaller, he carried out to the ends of the branches. Jar after jar of perfume he carried, too, until the blossoms were quite complete.

Then one evening—it was the last of May, or early June —Life-of-the-Bush called him.

"To-morrow," she said, "there is to be a great Garden Festival. A prize is to be given for the most original and beautiful blossom. All the flowers of the season will be here in the garden. You have been a good friend and a faithful

helper. For reward, you may go to the Festival and stay as long as your heart desires."

"But how shall I go?" queried the snowball.

"Right out through the end of one of my branches," said Life-of-the-Bush.

"But I shall fall off," said the snowball.

"I'll tie you on with a stout string, so that not even the wind can blow you off."

"But it's hot outside. I shall melt."

"O, no. I've changed you so the hottest sun cannot melt you."

"But how can I get out through the end of the branch?" asked the snowball, who could not get it through his head that he could really get out to the end of a branch and stay there all day and not fall off or melt.

"Make yourself very small, just as small as when you came up to me and you can go out as easily as you run along these halls," said Life-of-the-Bush.

The snowball became quite excited. The Festival was to begin very early in the morning. Besides he wanted to see, if he could, what had become of the other snowballs. So he decided that he would go out on the branch that night, while it was dark, and be there for the whole day's fun.

So he made himself very small, ran along the hall, crept out through a tiny green door and found himself tied securely to a swaying branch. The air was cool and sweet. He

didn't melt, as he half-feared he might, and he didn't fall off. He looked around. Yes, this was the very bush he had seen before, but it was greener now. Morning came and the great Festival. The garden was full of flowers and folks.

There were lilacs and lilies of shades manifold
There were daisies, and daffodils, yellow as gold.
There were pansies, and peonies, red, white and pink,
And every such flower of which you can think.

You ought to have heard the "Ah's!" and the "Oh's!"
Of all the fine people in all their fine clothes.
You ought to have seen that wonderful sight,
For no rhyme of mine can describe it half right.

People went from bush to bush and from flower to flower. They could not for the life of them tell which blossom they thought most beautiful and original.

The judges wandered about uncertainly with the ribbons in their pockets not knowing to what plant or bush to tie them.

The snowball grew very much interested, not to say excited, to see what blossom would finally win the prize.

He noticed that groups of people continually stopped before the bush on which he hung. Apparently they admired it. He soon discovered that they were looking at him and was quite embarrassed.

"Look!" he kept hearing them say, "See this snowball,—and it doesn't melt! Why it's growing on the bush; it's a blossom!" That was the first that *he* knew that Life-of-the-

Bush had changed him from a snowball into a flower snowball. Of course he became very happy and twice as excited.

Indeed, he could hardly breathe from excitement, when the judges came over, in a group, to where he grew. They looked at him and at the bush. Apparently they had never seen blossoms of this kind before.

"I never saw such a big, round, white blossom before," he heard one of them say, as he drew a blue ribbon from his pocket and tied it to the stem on which he hung. He knew, and soon, of course, everybody knew, that the "Snowball Bush" had won the prize. His heart beat so fast that he thought he was growing red in the face. *Perhaps he was melting!* But he wasn't, for he heard a girl say just then, as she passed, "How white and cool it looks!"

Snowball Number One had often wondered what had happened to his friends, the other snowballs. One reason why he had been anxious to get out of the bush was to find out, if he could, what had become of them all. But the doings of the day had driven all thought of them out of his busy head.

Now, as the people began to leave the garden, and excitement grew less, he remembered and looked about him. Here was the yard in which the boys made him. There was the very place under the edge of the veranda where he had spent the winter and where they had all stood that spring morning when Life-of-the-Bush called to them. There was the place, almost under him, where he knew they had all tumbled down

the moment he left them. But not a trace of a snowball could be seen.

Of course not! They had all disappeared long ago, the very day, indeed, in which they tumbled down. Before noon the hot sun had melted them, every one, and carried them away, tan and freckles and all, and no one ever heard of them again.

Number One, who ran right out into the sun, was the only snowball that didn't melt.

RAGGLES, AN INDIAN PONY

Raggles was the name of a little Indian pony. He belonged to a little girl who lived on the prairie.

Raggles had come to her father's ranch one cold morning. When Mr. Hudson saw the scrubby-looking little fellow standing before the gate, he started to drive him away.

"Let him in father," said his little girl. "He looks so hungry."

Mr. Hudson opened the gate and the pony walked in as if he were at home. Mr. Hudson tried to find out who owned the pony. But no one claimed him. He had been cruelly turned out on the prairie to shift for himself.

So Lillie kept him as her own and gave him the name of Raggles. The name suited the little fellow well, for he had a long tangled mane and tail.

He was a good little creature and Lillian soon learned to ride him over the prairie. Every morning she would ride Raggles to the school which was two miles away. Then she would send him home. At about half past three in the afternoon Mr. Hudson would saddle Raggles and send him to the school for Lillian. If he got to school too early, he would wait patiently at the door till school was over.

RAGGLES, AN INDIAN PONY

The winter Raggles came to live with Lillian there was a terrible snow storm. The storm began at noon and it became bitterly cold. The snow blew so thick and fast that people could see only a few feet. People were lost in the snow while trying to get from their barns to their houses.

Lillian was at school. Her mother was afraid to trust Raggles to go for her. But Mr. Hudson was ill and there was no one else to go. She went to the barn and put the saddle on him. Then she tied on plenty of good warm wraps. At last she put her arms around the shaggy neck.

"Go, Raggles," she said. "Bring Lillian safely home."

Raggles seemed to understand. Away he trotted through the terrible storm in the direction of the school house.

The child's mother and father waited anxiously. After two hours the shaggy form of Raggles could be seen through the blinding snow. Lillian was safe on his back bundled up from head to foot.

Her teacher had fastened her on Raggles back and had given Raggles the rein. With wonderful strength the wise little pony had battled his way through the storm and had brought his little mistress safely home.

Retold from *"Our Dumb Animals."*

THE BAD LITTLE GOBLIN'S NEW YEAR

COME, children dear, let's sit on the floor around the fire, so, and watch those golden flames dancing and leaping. You see that very gay one just springing up the chimney? I know a story about him, a New Year's story. Let's snuggle up closer and look into the fire. You see that piece of coal black wood, there at the end? There was a horrid little goblin once who was as black as that bit of wood. His clothes were all black, his round cap looked like a bit of coal, his pointed shoes were jet black, and his face was dark with dirt and an ugly scowling expression. Altogether he was a horrid looking goblin, and he was just as hateful as he looked. There wasn't a single person who liked him. The birds hated him because he would wait after dark when all the baby birds were cuddled down in the nest, fast asleep. Then he would pop up from under the nest where he had been hiding and cry, "Morning time, wake up!" and all the babies would cry, "Chirp, chirp, Daddy, bring us our breakfast!" They opened their bills so wide that it took a long time to shut them and put the excited babies to sleep again. Once Blackie, that was the goblin's name, dropped a bit of twig down into a

baby's open bill and the poor bird coughed so hard that he kept the birds in the nests around awake all night. Blackie chuckled with glee and went scurrying off on another prank.

While the mother bunnies were asleep, he painted the tiny white flags they wear under their tails with brown mud from the marsh. When morning-time really did come and the mother bunnies woke up and called to their children to follow them, the little bunnies couldn't see any white flags on their mothers' tails to follow, and all became lost in the long grass. It took the whole day to gather them together, and still longer to get those flags clean again.

Blackie jumped for joy. The mother bunnies would have liked to reach him with their sharp claws, but he was too quick for them.

Then Blackie found the holes where the squirrels had hidden their nuts for the winter. It had taken months to gather them, but Blackie waited until they were out hunting again, and he carried all the nuts away and hid them in the roots of an old tree where they would never think of looking!

That wasn't all! Blackie did one last thing so terrible that I don't like to tell you about it. He waited until a robin's nest was full of lovely blue eggs and the father bird was off in search of worms. Then he made such a rustling in the next tree that the mother bird flew off to see what it was; and while she was gone, Blackie danced upon the eggs until they were all broken!

That filled the timid wood creatures with fury. The birds, the rabbits, and the squirrels rushed upon the goblin and drove him before them. The birds pecked him with their beaks, and the squirrels and rabbits hopped after him with their claws outstretched. Away ran Blackie, really frightened at last, faster and faster until he reached the darkest part of the whole forest. There he jumped into a hole in a tree, and curled himself up so tightly that his round cap touched his pointed shoes; and while he trembled with fear, he heard the birds and bunnies and squirrels go tearing past, thinking that the wicked little goblin was still running ahead of them.

When they had all gone, Blackie peeked out of his hole. Oh, how terribly quiet it was! Not a bird chirped, not a squirrel or rabbit or a woodchuck lived there. It was so quiet and so dark and so lonely that Blackie began to feel quite forlorn.

"I would almost be polite to a tree toad!" he thought, but not even a croak or a buzz or a rustle broke the stillness. The bad little goblin put his head down upon his black knees and went to sleep; there was nothing else to do!

The first sound which woke him up was, "Chop-chop!" He rubbed his eyes and peeked out. He saw woodcutters cutting down trees with their sharp axes. Then he saw them coming toward the tree where he was hiding. Shaking with terror, Blackie curled himself up into a

tight ball. Chop-chop-crash went the tree, and Blackie's head bumped hard against the top of his hole as, still inside it, he felt the tree fall to the ground. That was rather fun, and much excited he peeked out of a crack and watched the men fastening chains around the trees and loading them on wheels. His own tree went, too, and the next thing Blackie heard was saw-saw, as the tree was sawed into logs at a lumber yard. Again he rolled up tight, hoping that the knives wouldn't cut him in two; and they didn't! He was still safe in his hole when his log was thrown with others, right down into a dark cellar. It was even drearier there than in the forest and Blackie began to long for some playfellows.

"I wouldn't tease them. I'd just play with them nicely," he sighed; and two tears ran down his little black face, washing it almost clean.

Then Blackie heard a strange new sound. It was gayer than a squirrel's chatter, sweeter than a bird's song,—it was a child's laughter! Where did it come from? Blackie stopped crying and listened. It came again and the laughter of other children mingled with it. Blackie peeked out. There was no one in the cellar. He crept out and tiptoed up the stairs, in search of those laughing voices. Hiding in the shadows so that no one could see him, he passed through the kitchen and on into a room full of sunshine and children. He ran in and hid behind a curtain, peeking out curiously. In the center of the room stood a little golden-haired girl,

the one whose laughter he had first heard. But as Blackie watched her with delight he saw her pucker up her face as though she were going to cry.

"My dolly, my dear dolly, I tan't find her!" she wailed. In a flash all the other boys and girls were searching under chairs and tables for the runaway dolly. They couldn't find her, but Blackie saw a pair of doll's feet poking out from under the sofa. He hopped swiftly across the floor, pulled the doll out by one leg, and placed her on a chair beside the little girl.

"Oh, see, my doll's tum back!" she cried, hugging her with joy. "She went for a walk and tame back again!" and taking the doll's two hands in hers she danced with her around the room. The other children danced, too, and their laughter rang out again. "She went for a walk and came back all herself!" they cried.

Blackie thought he had never seen or heard anything so merry, it made him want to dance, also. Poor little black goblin whom the maid, if she had seen him, would have swept out of the room, mistaking him for a bit of coal!

But Blackie took care that no one did see him. Except, perhaps, the children, I don't know whether anyone ever saw him or not. He spent most of the time with them, and somehow they seemed to know that he was there and that he was their friend. Every evening when they had their supper they put a bowl of milk in front of the fire for him, and when

they came in to breakfast the bowl was always empty. I don't know how Blackie drank it without being seen, for he still slept in his log in the cellar and was asleep as soon as the children's heads touched their pillows. The children's mother was puzzled over that empty bowl, but she might have guessed there was a friendly goblin in the house by the way lost things were always turning up.

"I can't find my thimble!" the mother would cry. "Come, children, and look for it!" On the floor, under the rug, in the flower pots, and on the tables hunted the children. But hiding behind the curtain Blackie had seen a bit of something gold shining through the tassels of the sofa. Quick as a flash, he pulled it out and placed it on the arm of the mother's chair. "Why, here it is!" she exclaimed. "How did it get there?" The children laughed and winked at one another, as though they understood, but how could they explain about the goblin to mother?

Their father was always looking for his spectacles. Mother, the children, and all the maids would be called in to help search. Before Blackie came they often searched for hours, but he always found them in a twinkling, in a book, perhaps, or under the fender, and would place them right in front of father. "Gracious, look here, there must be some magic around!" he would cry, and the children would jump up and down with glee! They knew all about the magic. They

guessed that a little black goblin was also jumping with delight behind the curtain!

One morning,—it was New Year's Day,— Blackie slept longer than usual. He was curled up inside his log, so sound asleep that even the joggling of his home being carried upstairs didn't waken him. Then he was turned upside down, and, opening his eyes, he peeked out of the crack and found that the log, was about to be thrown onto the blazing fire! Crash! it went. How very warm it was, and then Blackie heard the children laughing. He poked his head out and saw them all sitting in front of the fire, watching the blaze. All around Blackie red and yellow flames were dancing, so gay, so golden, so happy that Blackie forgot to be frightened. "I want to be gay, too!" he cried. "I want to laugh with the children and dance with the flames." His log caught fire, blazed up and out sprang Blackie,—a little black goblin no longer!

Instead, he was the shiniest, most dancing golden flame that you ever saw! For a few moments he just danced up and down with delight; then, waving and bowing to the children, he cried, "Happy New Year! Happy New Year!" and sprang up the chimney. The children's glad voices echoed after him.

When he reached the top he saw a glorious sight. The sun shining on the snow and ice turned the world into a sparkling Fairy-land, and the sky was as blue as forget-me-nots, or

Polly's eyes, or the very bluest thing you have ever seen. Blackie danced with the sunbeams over the glittering ice until he almost ran into a flock of little birds huddled down in the snow, too cold to fly. Their feathers were ruffled and they looked very miserable.

"Come and play with me!" he cried, dancing around them. He was so gay and so beautiful that they forgot the cold, and flew in circles around him. "Come and join us!" he cried to a group of rabbits who were hunched up upon the snow, half-frozen. They hopped along slowly toward him and then—they, too, forgot the cold while they played games with the golden goblin and the birds, until they were all as merry as the sunbeams. "Happy New Year! Happy New Year!" they called to one another, and to the twinkling flame goblin.

Then Blackie saw some squirrels curled up on the branches of a tree so miserable they couldn't even make-believe scamper.

"What is the matter; do you want some nuts?" he cried. "Follow me!" And away he darted to the roots of the tree where, as a naughty little goblin, he had hidden their winter store. The squirrels followed slowly, but when they saw their treasure their eyes sparkled, their teeth chattered with delight, and they scampered back and forth from the tree root to their own holes, their paws full of nuts. They were as gay as Blackie himself. "Happy New Year! Happy New Year!" they cried to their gleaming friend, whom they

never dreamed was the bad little goblin they had chased away the autumn before!

So all day and for many days the goblin danced and sang and helped people and birds and the wood creatures. He twinkled as merrily in the sunshine out of doors as he did when he danced in the fire, warming the children and singing them songs.

"It's like Happy New Year every day when the goblin is here!" cried the children, dancing as gayly on the hearth rug as the sprite was dancing within the fire. "There he is now, do you see him? He is dancing and crackling and crying to all of us, 'Happy New Year, Happy New Year!' "

HOLLY

Highty-tighty, Paradighty,
Clothèd all in green.
The King could not read it
No more could the Queen.
They sent for a Wise Man out of the East,
Who said it had horns but was not a beast.
(Old Riddle.)

There was once upon a time a very war-like kingdom where they had never heard of Christmas. The men spent all their days fighting, and the women spent *their* days in urging the warriors to further deeds of valour.

This had gone on for a very long time, and no one had ever yet said that he was tired of it. There was but one person in the whole kingdom who had openly declared that war was hateful, but as she was only the Youngest Princess nobody paid any heed to her.

Then came a time, just before our Christmas Day, when the King was preparing a great campaign against a far-off country. He called together his Council of War—grave old warriors, dressed completely in armour.

"My friends," said he, "we are about to wage war on the

distant kingdoms of Zowega. Up till this time the people of that country have been our very good friends, but as we have now conquered all our enemies, there seems no one but our friends left to fight, and of these the King of the Zowegians is chief.

"You will remember that his youngest son, Prince Moldo, spent some of his boyhood at our court in order to gain instruction in feats of arms, and that the Prince left us to travel over the world. A few months ago his father sent word to me that the Prince had returned home, bringing with him the news of a Pearl of Great Price, which contained the Secret of Happiness. It is this Pearl which I have made the excuse for war, for I have demanded it in payment for the services that we rendered to Prince Moldo. In my message I have said that if the Pearl, and the Secret which it contains, are not brought and revealed to us here within the next five days, our troops will descend upon the kingdom of Zowega and wipe it off the face of the earth."

Loud and long cheered the Council at the speech of their King, as, indeed, was their duty, though in their hearts of hearts they had no wish to fight against the King of the Zowegians, who was their very good friend. The Queen and the Princesses smiled graciously upon them, all save the Youngest Princess, who had been Prince Moldo's playfellow. She disgraced herself by bursting into passionate tears, and was forthwith ordered out of the Council Hall.

At the end of five days the Council once more assembled to await the arrival of the messenger with the answer from the King of Zowega.

The day was bright and cold, and there was snow on the ground. The King and Queen were wrapped in thick fur cloaks. The Princesses were all assembled, too, even the Youngest, who was dressed in ermine and looked as pale as death.

It was Christmas Eve, but there were no Christmas trees preparing and no presents. No one was thinking of hanging his stockings up. The Hall was not decorated, neither were the churches; indeed, there were no churches to decorate, for, as you remember, the people in this kingdom knew nothing about Christmas.

The Council sat and waited in the big bare Hall.

At last the great doors were flung open, there was a blast of trumpets, and the messenger appeared.

He was tall and fair, and held himself proudly. His eyes were bright and shining and there was a smile upon his face. He was completely dressed in bright green and the Council noted with astonishment that he was without armour of any kind. He wore neither breastplate, shield nor helmet; he had neither sword by his side, nor spurs on his feet. He was bare-headed, and in his right hand he carried something green, horny and prickly, with little red dots on it.

Looking neither to the right nor to the left, he walked with

firm and steady step up the long Hall between the rows of armed warriors.

As he passed the Youngest Princess she blushed deeply, but he did not seem to notice her.

When he reached the throne he bowed low before the King and Queen, and laid the prickly object on the table before them.

"Your Majesty," said he in a clear, ringing voice. "From the King of Zowega, greeting! He sends you this token. It is the symbol of the Secret of Happiness."

The King stared, so did the Queen.

They had expected a Pearl of Great Price, accompanied by a scroll on which was written the Secret of Happiness, and the King of Zowega had sent them *this!*

Amid dead silence the King took the token up in his hands in order to examine it more carefully.

He dropped it hastily, for it pricked him, and little drops of blood were seen starting from his hand.

"Highty-tighty!" said he. " 'Tis surely some kind of beast and a symbol of war, for it pricked me right smartly. Truly the King of Zowega deals in riddles which I for one cannot read! Take it, my dear," added he to the Queen and pointing to the token; "perchance your quick wits may be able to understand this mystery."

She picked up the token and examined it carefully.

It rather resembled the branch of a tree, but the leaves

were thick and resisting and edged with very sharp spikes, and there was on it a cluster of round, bright red objects like tiny balls. But even as it had pricked the King so did it prick her, and she dropped it hastily into the lap of the Eldest Princess, who was sitting beside her.

"Paradighty!" exclaimed the Queen in her own language. "It is certainly a beast. See, it has horns!" and she pointed to the spikes.

"But I certainly cannot read the riddle—if riddle it be."

Then it was passed to all the Princesses in turn, but they could not read the token any more than could the King and Queen. At last it reached the Youngest Princess, and, though it pricked her little hands sorely, she took it up tenderly and kissed it.

" 'Tis a token of love," said she.

The messenger turned his shining eyes full upon her.

"The Princess has read the riddle of the token aright," said he, and he stepped forward as though to kiss her hand.

"Stay!" said the King imperiously springing to his feet. "A token of love, forsooth! But I sent the King of Zowega a Declaration of War! What does he mean by sending me a token of love? The Princess must certainly be mistaken—and as for *you,*" he continued, turning fiercely to the messenger, "you shall be marched off to prison until we have had time to consult with our Wise Men as to the real meaning of this extraordinary token."

So there and then the messenger was marched off to spend the night in prison, and all the Wise Men in the kingdom were bidden to appear in the Council Chamber the very next day, especially one very old Wise Man from the East who was reputed to be wiser than all the others put together.

The next day, of course, was Christmas Day; but, as these people had never heard of Christmas, there were no bells ringing, no carols were sung, and there was neither holly, ivy nor mistletoe upon the walls.

Slowly and painfully the Wise Men began to arrive.

They were all dressed alike, in black flowing robes, and on their heads they wore long pointed black caps covered with weird devices.

The very old Wise Man from the East wore a red pointed cap, but in all other respects was dressed just like the others.

They assembled round a large circular table at one end of the Hall. In the middle of the table was placed the token.

At the other end of the Hall were gathered the warriors, and above them on a double throne sat the King and Queen with the Princesses grouped on either side of the dais.

The Wise Men examined the token in silence.

" 'Tis a curious beast," said one of them at last.

"Of a new and quite unheard-of species," said another.

"It has neither legs nor tail," said a third.

"Yet it has a number of globular red eyes," said a fourth.

"And it certainly has horns," said a fifth.

And so said they all, until it came to the turn of the very old Wise Man from the East.

He looked long at the token.

"It has horns," said he at last, "but it is not a beast."

"Not a beast!" said they, one to the other.

"But what is it then?"

"It is a token of love," said he.

"Highty-tighty," interrupted the King. "Read us then the full meaning of the token."

"I cannot," said the very old Wise Man; "but let the youth be brought hither who carried it. He will be able to explain it more fully than I."

"Paradighty!" said the Queen in her own language. "Why did we not think of that before! Fetch him back again at once!"

So two of the warriors fetched the youth from prison, and he was soon standing before the Assembly, with his head held as high and his eyes as bright and shining as before.

"Read us the token!" commanded the King.

The youth bowed low. "The Princess read it aright yesterday. It is a token of love."

"Explain yourself!" said the King. "How can a beast with horns be a token of love?"

The youth drew himself up to his full height.

"It is not a beast," said he. "It is the branch of a holly-tree. On this day of the year, which in my country we call

Christmas Day, our people decorate their houses with branches of this holly or holy tree as a token of love and peace and good-will. This is the message that I have brought to you—a message that we in our country know very well, but which you have never heard before."

The King and the Warriors, the Wise Men, the Queen and Princesses all listened to his words in silence.

When he had ended there was a long pause.

"And in what particular way does your message affect us?" said the King at last.

"Thus, your Majesty," answered the youth, approaching the Youngest Princess and taking both her hands in his, "on this day I, Prince Moldo, would have peace and good-will between my kingdom and your kingdom; and I would seal it for ever by taking the Youngest Princess home with me as my bride. You, O King, recognized me not, for I have much changed since I lived here with her for playfellow, but in all my wanderings I found a Pearl of no greater price than this, and I would proclaim to all the world that the Secret of Happiness is Love."

So on that very Christmas Day they were married, amid great rejoicings, and war ceased throughout the kingdom. And on every Christmas Day for ever after, the people of that country decorated their houses with holly, the symbol of love and peace and good-will, and wished each other a Merry Christmas, even as I do now to you.

A BARN-YARD MEETING

NINE O'CLOCK on a snowy winter morning! At farmer Walters' home the path was not yet broken down to the barn, and in the farmhouse itself there were no signs of life. It was plain that the morning chores had not yet been done and the animals had not yet been fed.

But down at the barn-yard there was an unusual stir. The black Minorca rooster, mounted on top of a snow-covered strawstack, was pealing forth a lusty summons:

"A barn-yard meeting h-e-r-e!"

"A barn-yard meeting h-e-r-e!"

And at this clarion call all the doors of the stables, the poultry-house, and the great barn itself began to open up, and as if by common consent the farmyard animals—horses, cows, pigs, sheep, turkeys, geese, ducks, hens—came trooping forth into the barn-yard to the foot of the strawstack, which was the appointed place of meeting.

"A barn-yard meeting h-e-r-e!"

"A barn-yard meeting h-e-r-e!"

sang chanticleer from the top of the stack, but still there were no signs of stir or life at the farmhouse.

When at last the farm animals were all assembled, the

black Minorca came down from his station on the strawstack, and, at a call for silence from the bronze turkey gobbler, every one knew that the meeting was about to open. There was no need to explain why the meeting was called; for these barnyard gatherings were never held except to discuss farmyard grievances, and it was only a question as to who should begin. But as it was Mrs. Brindle who usually had most to say on these occasions, it was agreed that she should be permitted to speak first. From what Mrs. Brindle had to say it was easy to see that she was in a very cross and ugly mood. She had not been milked the night before, her stall had not been cleaned, and, worse than all, she had not been properly watered and fed.

Mrs. Brindle's speech was interrupted at least half a dozen times by Mrs. Jersey, Mrs. Holstein, and Mrs. Ayrshire, who declared, one and all, that they would go dry if this thing happened many times more.

"I object to these irregular hours for milking, too," continued Mrs. Brindle. "Here it is after nine to-day and I was milked at half past seven yesterday morning. Why don't they get a time and stick to it? I am sure I should give more milk if they did."

"It's bad enough to have the dog set on you," said Mrs. Ayrshire, "and to be milked by a green farm-hand, but when it comes to being shut up in a dirty stable with no light and no fresh air——"

"They don't give me enough water," interrupted Mrs. Holstein. "I suppose they think I'm made of milk. If things don't change around this farm, I *will* go dry."

"Serve 'em right! Serve 'em right!" added Mr. Durham in a deep bass voice. "I want my breakfast."

Mr. Grunter and Mrs. Razorback began to talk at the same time, and it was rather hard to make out what they both had to say; but Mr. Grunter was objecting to his pen not being cleaned, while Mrs. Razorback kept on grumbling about the muddy water that she was given to drink.

"I'd keep myself clean," said Mr. Grunter, "if only they'd give me a chance. If I only had a clean straw bed you wouldn't catch me out here on a cold morning like this."

At this Mrs. Razorback began to shiver with the cold, and as soon as she could escape observation she withdrew to the shelter of the strawstack and buried herself in the straw.

Mrs. Bay and Mrs. Gray and young Miss Filly were all of the same opinion. No attention, they claimed, was ever given to their comfort or their personal appearance.

"You've only to look at us," complained Miss Filly, "to see how we are treated. My coat hasn't been brushed for the last month. Nobody ever grooms us and no one cares how we look."

"Humph!" interrupted young Mr. Thoroughbred. "That's nothing! How would you like to be left without a blanket, and have a frozen bit put into your mouth, and get nothing

but ice-water to drink? When I come in from work no one ever gives me a rub-down, and as for oats——"

"Oats!" exclaimed Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Bay and old Mr. Clydesdale in a single breath. "Did you say OATS?"

At this the ducks set up a fearful quacking, for none of them had been fed, until the black Minorca rooster climbed up on the ladder that leaned against the stack, and shouted:

"This will never d-o-o-o!"

"This will never d-o-o-o!"

and order was restored once again.

The bronze turkey spoke next, but, as usual, he would talk of nothing but the loss of his family last Thanksgiving; at which Mrs. Razorback, who had recently lost her whole family, came out from under the straw and set up such a squealing that not a syllable more of his story could be heard.

Then the black Minorca chickens began to chatter all at once, and from what you could make out of their talk it was all about sunshine, and fresh air, and good nesting-places, and clean perches, and proper food, until, having fairly talked themselves out of breath, the black Minorca rooster declared that none of his family would lay another egg until they were better treated.

Just at this moment the kitchen door of the farm-house opened, and the hired man came out to get an armful of wood for kindling. At this all the animals in the barn-yard set up such a lowing and squealing and whinnying and cackling

that even the black Minorca could not be heard as he mounted the strawstack once more to declare that the meeting was adjourned.

"Just listen to those animals," said Mrs. Walters as she put up the bed-room blind. "I never heard such a clatter. Whatever can be the matter with them? One would think, to listen to them, that they had *never* been fed!"

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A JANUARY THAW

It was the twenty-first of January—the dead of winter! The stubborn cold had had the out of doors under lock and key since Thanksgiving Day. We were having a hard winter, and the novelty of the thing was beginning to wear off—to us grown-ups anyhow, and to the birds and wild things which for weeks had found scant picking over the ice and snow. But I was snug enough in my upstairs study, when suddenly the door opened and four bebundled boys stood before me, with an axe, a long-handled shovel, a basket, and, evidently, a big secret.

"Come on, father," they whispered (as if she hadn't heard them clomping with their kit through the house!), it's mother's birthday to-morrow, and we're going after the flowers."

"Going to chop them down with the axe or dig them up with the shovel?" I asked. "Going to give her a nice bunch of frost-flowers? Better get the ice-saw then, for we'll need a big block of ice to stick their stems in."

"Hurry," they answered, dropping my hip-boots on the floor. "Here are your scuffs."

I hurried, and soon the five of us, in single file were out on the meadow, the dry snow squeaking under our feet, while the little winds, capering spitefully about us, blew the snow-dust into our faces; or, catching up the thin drifts, sent them whirling like waltzing wraiths of dancers over the meadow's glittering floor.

I was beginning to warm up a little, but it was a numb, stiff world about us, and bleak and stark, a world all black and white, for there was not even blue overhead. The white underfoot ran off to meet the black of the woods, and the woods in turn stood dark against a sky so heavy with snow that it seemed to shut us into some vast snow cave. A crow flapping over drew a black pencil line across the picture—the one sign of life besides ourselves that we could see. Only small boys are likely to leave their firesides on such a day—only small boys, and those men who can't grow up. Yet never before, perhaps, had even they gone out on such a tramp with an axe, a shovel, and a basket, to pick flowers!

Suddenly one of the boys dashed off, crying: "Let's go see if the muskrats have gone to bed yet!" and, trailing after him, we made for a little mound that stood about three feet high out in the meadow, more like a big ant hill or a small, snow-piled haycock, than a lodge of any sort. Only a practiced eye could have seen it, and only a lover of bleak days would have known what might be alive in there.

We crept up softly and surrounded the lodge; then with

the axe we struck the frozen, flinty roof several ringing blows. Instantly one-two-three muffled, splashy "plunks" were heard as three little muskrats, frightened out of their naps and half out of their wits, plunged into the open water of their doorways from off their damp, but cosy couch.

It was a mean thing to do—but not very mean as wild animal life goes. And it did warm me up so, in spite of the chilly plunge the little sleepers took! Chilly to them? Not at all and that is why it warmed me. To hear the splash of water down under the two feet of ice and snow that sealed the meadow like a sheet of steel! To hear the sounds of stirring life, and to picture that snug, steaming bed on the top of a tough old tussock, with its open water-doors leading into freedom and plenty below! "Why, it won't be long before the arbutus is in bloom," I began to think. I looked at the axe and the shovel and said to myself, "Well, the boys may know what they are doing after all, though three muskrats do not make a spring."

We had cut back to our path, but had not gone ten paces along it before another boy was off to the left in the direction of a piece of maple swamp.

"He's going to see if 'Hairy' is in his hole," they informed me; and we all took after him. The "hole" was almost twenty-five feet up in a dead oak stub that had blown off and lodged against a live tree. The meadow had been bleak and windswept, but the swamp was naked and dead, filled with ice and

touched with a most forbidding emptiness and stillness. I was getting cold again, when the boy ahead tapped lightly on the old stub, and at the empty hole appeared a head—a fierce black and white head, a sharp, long beak, a flashing eye—as "Hairy" came forth to fight for his castle. He was too wise a fighter to tackle all of us, however, so, slipping out, he spread his wings and galloped off with a loud, wild call that set all the swamp to ringing.

It was a thrilling, defiant challenge that set my blood to leaping again. Black and white, he was a part of the picture, but there was a scarlet band at the nape of his neck that, like his call, had fire in it and the warmth of life.

As his woodpecker shout went booming through the hollow halls of the swamp, it woke a blue jay who squalled back from a clump of pines, then wavering out into the open on curious wings—flashing ice-blue and snow-white wings—he dived into the covert of pines again; and faint, as if from beyond the swamp, came the cheep of chickadees! Here a little troop of them came to peep into the racket, curious but not excited, discussing the disturbance of the solemn swamp in that desultory, sewing-bee fashion of theirs, as if nipping off threads and squinting through needle-eyes between their running comment.

They, too, were grey and black, grey as the swamp beeches, black as the spotted bark of the birches. And how tiny! But——

"Here was this atom in full breath
Hurling defiance at vast death—
This scrap of valour just for play
Fronts the north wind in waistcoat grey,"

And this, also, is what Emerson says he sings,

"Good day, good sir!
Fine afternoon, old passenger!
Happy to meet you in these places
Where January brings few faces."

And as I brought to mind the poet's lines, I forgot to shiver, and quite warmed up again to the idea of flowers, especially as one of the boys just then brought up a spray of green holly with a burning red berry on it!

We were tacking again to get back on our course, and had got into the edge of the swamp among the pines when the boy with the shovel began to study the ground and the trees with a searching eye, moving forward and back as if trying to find the location of something.

"Here it is," he said, and set in digging through the snow at the foot of a big pine. I knew what he was after. It was gold thread, and here was the only spot, in all the woods about, where we had ever found it—a spot not larger than the top of a dining-room table.

Soon we had a fistful of the delicate plants with their evergreen leaflets and long, golden thread-like roots, that mixed with the red and green of the partridge berry in a finger-bowl makes a cheerful little winter bouquet. And here with the

gold thread, about the butt of the pine, was the partridge berry, too, the dainty vines strung with the beads which seemed to burn holes in the snow that had covered and banked the tiny fires.

For this is all that the ice and snow had done. The winter had come with wind enough to blow out every flame in the maple tops, and with snow enough to smother every little fire in the peat bogs of the swamp; but peat fires are hard to put out, and here and everywhere the winter had only banked the fires of summer. Dig down through the snow ashes anywhere and the smouldering fires of life burst into blaze.

But the boy with the axe had gone on ahead. And we were off again after him, stopping to get a great armful of black alder branches that were literally aflame with red berries.

We were climbing a piny knoll when almost at our feet, jumping us nearly out of our skins, and warming the very roots of our hair, was a burrrr—burrrr—burrrr—burrrr—four big partridges—as if four big snow mines had exploded under us, hurling bunches of brown on graceful scaling wings over the dip of the hills!

On we went up over the knoll and down into a low bog where, in the summer, we gather high-bush blueberries, the boy with the axe leading the way and going straight across the ice toward the middle of the bog.

My eye was keen for signs, and soon I saw he was heading for a sweet-pepper bush with a broken branch. My eye took

in another bush off a little to the right with a broken branch. The boy with the axe walked up to the broken sweet-pepper bush and drew a line on the ice between it and the bush off on the right, pacing along this line till he got the middle; then he started at right angles from it and paced off a line to a clump of cat-tails sticking up through the ice of the flooded bog. Halfway back on this line he stopped, threw off his coat and began to chop a hole about two feet square in the ice. Removing the block while I looked on, he rolled up his sleeve and reached down the length of his arm through the icy water.

"Give me the shovel," he said, "it's down here," and with a few deep, dexterous cuts soon brought to the surface a beautiful cluster of pitcher plants, the strange, almost uncanny leaves filled with muddy water, but every pitcher of them intact, shaped and veined and tinted by a master potter's hand.

We wrapped it all carefully in newspapers, and put it in the basket, starting back with our bouquet as cheerful and as full of joy in the season as we could possibly have been in June.

No, I did not say that we love January as much as we love June. January here in New England is a mixture of rheumatism, chillblains, frozen water pipes, mittens, overshoes, blocked trains, and automobile troubles by the hoodsful, whereas any automobile will run in June. I have not room

in this essay to tell all that June is; besides, this is a story of January.

What I was saying is that we started home all abloom with our pitcher plants, and gold thread, and partridge berry, and holly, and black alder, all aglow inside with our vigorous tramp, with the grey, grave beauty of the landscape, with the stern joy of meeting and beating the cold, and with the signs of life—of the cosy muskrats in their lodge beneath the ice cap on the meadow; with the hairy woodpecker in his deep, warm hole in the heart of the tree; with the red-warm berries in our basket; with the chirping, the conquering chickadee accompanying us and singing—

> "For well the soul, if stout within,
> Can arm impregnably the skin;
> And polar frost my form defied
> Made of the air that blows outside."

And actually as we came over the bleak meadow one of the boys said he thought he heard a song sparrow singing; and I thought the pussywillows by the brook had opened a little since we passed them coming out; and we all declared the weather had changed, and that there were signs of a break-up. But the thermometer stood at fifteen above zero when we got home—one degree colder than when we started! So we concluded that the January thaw must have come off inside of us; and if the colour of the four glowing faces is any sign, that was the correct reading of the weather.

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